



LIVES
OF
CERTAIN
FATHERS OF THE CHURCH.
VOL. III.

LIVES
OF CERTAIN
FATHERS OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"TALES OF KIRKBECK," "COUSIN EUSTACE," ETC.

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“ Since good men while they are alive have their conversation in heaven ; when they are in heaven it is also fit that they should, in their good names, live upon earth.”—BR. JEREMY TAYLOR.

**“ But all their minds are bent to holiness,
Their champions are the Prophets and Apostles,
Their weapons, holy saws of sacred Writ.”**

SHAKESPEARE.

P R E F A C E.

IN the Preface of the Second Volume of this little work, which is dated S. Barnabas, July 20th, 1850, it is remarkable that I used these words :

“The sooner we get ready for our conflict with the kingdom of the world, the better ; the sooner we prove our armour, the more fit we shall be to contend against the enemy ; and leading such lives as we here behold, contemplating the spirit of these holy men—their noble zeal, their faithful courage, their devoted self-sacrifice ; and imbibing from them principles of thought, of motive, and of life, by which we may exalt as they did the kingdom of CHRIST above the kingdom of the world, we shall do service each in our sphere, and each as

God may direct, for the good of souls and the restoration of the Church."

How little was it then thought, that so soon a trial-proof of the value of such principles was to be brought to issue, and so close at hand. The words were spoken then of S. Justin, S. Irenæus, and S. Polycarp ; men who perilled all, even unto death, for the sake of their Divine Master ; and they may be equally spoken of those whose lives will come before us in the present volume,—men whose positions in the arduous struggles of the Church were so remarkably similar to the struggles with which at the present moment we are surrounded. In the former it was a contest against the more fierce passions and unsubdued reason of the heathen ; in the latter, it was a more refined and subtle contest against the perversions of the faith among the Christians themselves, and the unjust aggressions of the temporal power of rulers who in theory acknowledged CHRIST to be their LORD. The latter case is more our own than the former.

In the interval of time which elapsed between the life of S. Clement of Alexandria, and the lives

of these holy men recorded in the present volume, specially those of S. Cyprian, S. Cyril, and S. Gregory Nazianzen, the Church had taken up an entirely different position in the world. Her contest no longer lay with an enemy without, but with traitors and disaffected within. Disputes, schisms, heresies, were sifting every soul within her pale; and here the labours of S. Cyprian, (though we are compelled to think him in error on the main point of his controversy, yet) tended much to the elucidation of true doctrine on one of the subjects most fatal to the present day; while the contests of S. Cyril, and the brave resolution of S. Gregory of Nazianzum remind us very closely of some of the duties which are even now claiming our performance in the service of the same LORD, and in defence of the same faith.

The two latter, S. Cyril and S. Gregory, cannot but forcibly strike our attention, as in some sort types of what God would expect of us at the present moment in the Church of our country.

Follow S. Cyril; see how schism and division rent the Church asunder. Those who had no right to assume the offices of the Church, presumed to

set themselves forward. Pretenders to power, and pretenders to the interpretation of doctrine, were rising up on all sides. S. Cyril comes forward as the defender of the faith, and proclaims Catholicity as the only test of truth. "If ever," he says, "thou art sojourning in any city, inquire not simply where the LORD's House is, (for the sects of the profane also make an attempt to call their own dens Houses of the LORD), nor merely where the *Church* is, *but where is the CATHOLIC Church?*" What would S. Cyril have said *now*, when the "sects of the profane" are in almost every street, and when our people have within the last year at their public county meetings, all but universally denied the Catholic faith, and assumed that their Church is "*Protestant*;" not meaning in its proper sense that which the Church of England may rightly be called, but positively meaning, that they repudiate, and cast out, and ignore the very idea of being Catholic at all? Alas! yes: and Bishops too have been found to join in the assertion of a "*Protestant faith*," thereby fraternizing with Dissenters and "Sects of the Profane." It will refresh us somewhat to turn away from these sad recollec-

tions to a better age and spirit, less compromising with their enemy the world.

Look at S. Gregory of Nazianzum—how truly noble and self-denying!—a lover of God, and not of himself, he leaves the Church which he had reared, the spiritual children whom he had fondly trained, the poor whom he had loved, and whose wants he had tended,—all the good works of his episcopate,—he leaves them all. For what? For the love of peace; to still divisions; to prevent animosities; to stop the violence of angry, persecuting Bishops. He would at all hazards give up self, so that none should say that division in the flock was *his*. “I am weary,” he says, “while I am forced to encounter rumours and envy, and not only with enemies, but friends, who wound more deeply and severely. I beseech you, by all that is dear and sacred, do me this kindness,—to dismiss me with your prayers. Let that be the reward of my conflicts and trials. Grant me a warrant for my discharge, as generals are wont to do to their worn out soldiers; and let it be, if you please, with an honorable acclamation at my exit. . . . As for my successor, God will provide Himself with

a Pastor, as once He did a lamb for a burnt-offering. I only beg this of you,—that you would choose such an one as may be the object of men's envy, rather than of their pity; *who may not be ready barely to comply with every one upon all occasions, but willing to venture the favor and the frowns of men in the doing of what is just and true.*"

May we not say, without offence to our spiritual rulers of the present day, that they might, with a great blessing both to themselves and those over whom they are set, study this noble example of S. Gregory,—his patient yielding of self and selfish goods, and a place in the world, for the sake of CHRIST, His Church, and His glory in the souls of men? Surely it must come to pass, that the more such illustrious examples of sanctity are brought before our notice, and the more our attention dwells upon their actions and sufferings, the more we shall shake off that unworthy spirit of Erastianism which now clings to us so closely in our dealings with the Church, and the more we shall find that it is more honorable, as well as more becoming the offices of our sacred order, to "obey

God rather than man," and to be content to give up houses, lands, and every temporal treasure, for His Sake, Who gave up all for us.

Much might be said in contrasting the Church of our time with the Church of the Fathers, but it has been done so frequently and so fully, that it would be needless to say more, but only for this one reason, that each year brings out the contrast more effectually, more vitally. While we behold such sacrifices as in these Fathers depicted,—such flying from the world, such hatred of riches, such endurance of privation, such contests for the Church, as CHRIST'S representative on earth, against kings and rulers, against worldly men, whose aim was, as it is now, to secularize, to contaminate, to undermine, and eventually to destroy,—what are we to say, whither will the unwilling mind be forced to wander in its meditation,—when now the struggle is *for*, not against, houses and lands, and palaces, and gains ;—*for*, not against, the power of kings and supremacy of crowns,—to the casting aside of true Catholic doctrine, and the subversion even of the very Creed that, from the Apostles' time till the present, has never been

denied. Must this ever be so? May not a few remain steadfast, and GOD hearken to their prayers? The end cannot be far. Let us pray in the words of our Blessed LORD for that end,—UNITY, and that unity faithful to Him Who first gave it to man at the day of Pentecost, when the Apostles met together “all with one accord in one place,” and when S. Peter concluded the first sermon the Church ever heard in these words,—“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

W. J. E. B.

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ORIGEN.

PRESBYTER AND CATECHIST OF ALEXANDRIA.

“ Into God’s word, as in a palace fair,
Thou ledest on and on, while still, beyond
Each chamber, touch’d by holy Wisdom’s wand,
Another opes, more beautiful and rare ;
And thou in each art kneeling down in prayer,
From link to link of that mysterious bond
Seeking for CHRIST ; but oh ! I fear thy fond
And beautiful torch, that with so bright a glare
Lighteth up all things, lest thy heaven-lit brand
And thy serene philosophy divine
Should take the colourings of earthly thought,
And I, by their sweet images o’erwrought,
Led by weak fancy, should let go truth’s hand,
And miss the way into the inner shrine.”

The Cathedral.

LIFE OF ORIGEN.

CHAPTER I.

“ Angels perceive
With undistempered and unclouded spirit
The object as it is : but, for ourselves,
That speculative height *we* may not reach.

* * * * *

Knowledge, for us, is difficult to gain—
So difficult to gain, and hard to keep
As virtue's self ; like virtue is beset
With snares, tried, tempted, subject to decay.”

The Excursion.

CHARACTER OF ORIGEN.—HIS BIRTH AND EARLY TRAINING.—S. CLEMENT, HIS MASTER, AND AMMONIUS.—MARTYRDOM OF LEONIDES.—ORIGEN RECEIVED BY AN ALEXANDRIAN MATRON.—HE OPENS A SCHOOL.—IS APPOINTED HEAD OF THE CATECHETICAL SCHOOL.—HIS ASCETICISM.—INFLUENCE OF HIS EXAMPLE.—HIS CONDUCT DURING THE PERSECUTION.—MARTYRS OF ALEXANDRIA.—THE EMPEROR CARACALLA.—ORIGEN TAKES HERACLES AS HIS ASSISTANT IN THE SCHOOL.—HIS STUDIES AND GREAT LEARNING.—FRIENDSHIP WITH AMBROSE.—ORIGEN VISITS ARABIA.

Few amongst the early Fathers of the Church laboured more earnestly and effectually in the great cause of Christianity than Origen, his personal ex-

ample, his oral teaching, and his most voluminous writings having individually and collectively no mean influence on both his contemporaries and on succeeding generations, whilst his pupils (and few have been able to boast of so many great and good disciples) were the means of propagating in various lands and amongst various people, CHRIST'S Faith. None who trace the records of Origen's life, who mark his early devotion, even like that of S. Timothy, who from a child had known the Scriptures, his unfailing spirit of self-denial and contempt for the good things of this world, and his constancy in persecution; none surely so doing can doubt of Origen's being one of those who, having "done and taught" God's commandments, "shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Yet by many he has been evil spoken of, his doctrines held up in abhorrence as contrary to the Catholic faith, and if not actually condemned as a heretic, at least he has not been reckoned amongst the saints whose blessed memory the Church loves to cherish as an example to those of her children who are still engaged in their earthly struggle. Origen doubtless held some doctrines of a questionable tendency, if pursued to the full extent of their spirit, but who is not liable to fall into error upon deep and abstruse matters? And let us carefully mark (for therein lies the most

useful lesson to us all), that whatsoever Origen wrote which might in any way appear to be contrary to the faith of CHRIST'S Holy Catholic Church, he declared that he did most unfeignedly regret and repent of; and if not to err is the most exalted and blessed state, surely next in His Eyes Who judges all men, are those who freely and heartily cast away their errors when convinced of them. Better far for Origen to be excluded from those whom his feeble and struggling fellow mortals call saints, if through the SAVIOUR'S Merits he is accepted into the company of the "holy and humble men of heart;" better to be ill spoken of amongst men, than to be amongst those of whom it is said :

" And ah ! to him what tenfold woe,
Who hides so well his sin,
Through earth he seems a saint to go,
Yet dies impure within."

But as we advance we shall inquire more both into the doctrines which this great man did hold, and into the opinions expressed concerning him by those who are entitled to our respect.

Alexandria was the birthplace of Origen Adamantius, a name which, though apparently given him before the adamantine and indomitable nature of his character could have appeared, yet must be

owned to be singularly appropriate. S. Jerome also calls him Calcenterus, the Iron-mould, but this appears to be only a surname in consequence of his resolute qualities. It was in the year 185, that Origen was born ; his father, Leonides, has been said by some to have been a Bishop, but this assertion wants authority ; it is probable that he was a layman, and as he effectually proved, one devoted to the Christian cause.

Origen was the eldest of seven sons, but of him only does history preserve any account. A Christian himself, Leonides failed not to train up his son in that faith, as the richest and most precious inheritance he could bestow upon him. At a very early age, Origen was already versed in the Holy Scriptures, beyond an ordinary degree, daily both reading them and learning large portions by heart, an exercise in which he took exceeding delight. Nor were these studies merely mechanical ; the boy sought diligently to understand what he read, and not satisfied with the more obvious interpretations and explanations, he was perpetually seeking to penetrate into the deeper and hidden meanings of the holy writings, often losing himself in abstruse speculations, and when unable to satisfy himself, perplexing his father with inquiries. Leonides may have foreseen that this restless spirit of speculative inquiry might hereafter lead his son beyond

the due limits assigned for man's curiosity concerning the deep things of God; and probably it was in fact from this very tendency that subsequently Origen was betrayed into wild and fanciful notions, not unattended with danger, which being misunderstood and misconstrued by less refined and subtle minds than his own, assumed, under their distorted representations, alarming and heretical forms. Accordingly, Leonides checked his boy's speculative inclinations, warning him to be content with the plain practical lessons which were presented to him all through the Scriptures, and which were more suitable to his age and position than their deeper mysteries. Yet, notwithstanding, Leonides delighted within himself to see such an earnest spirit in his son, a sign, he hoped, that Origen would be a great and a good man; and his prayers in behalf of the boy were mingled with thanks to God for having blessed him with so promising a child. Many a time, when wearied out with the ceaseless workings of his precocious mind, the little Origen lay sleeping in his bed, his father with an overflowing heart would steal up to him, and in the silence of the night pour forth his supplications for his child, and then reverently kiss him on the breast, that breast which he believed to be the shrine of the HOLY SPIRIT of God. And is it not so? Is not the breast of each little

one made a shrine for the HOLY SPIRIT, when borne from the baptismal font,

“ in pure vest,
Rob’d, and wash’d, and seal’d, and bless’d ?”

Joy to those parents who love to look upon their baptized little ones as temples of the HOLY GHOST, from which all stain, all impurity, should carefully be kept away, so that should they be early called to the Everlasting City, sin may not have cast its sullying, blighting shadow upon them.

Great must have been Origen’s advantages under such a father as Leonides, but he also had no common means of instruction in the public teaching of S. Clement of Alexandria and S. Pantænus. It was in their school that Origen and S. Alexander, afterwards Bishop of Jerusalem, contracted a warm and lasting friendship. After a time, however, Origen was placed among the disciples of Ammonius, one of the most illustrious teachers of the day, who had recently established a school at Alexandria. Ammonius was a Christian,¹ but also a follower of Plato, much of whose system of philosophy he blended with the precepts of the

¹ Ammonius was the first who composed a Harmony of the Gospels, which is still extant in a Latin translation. See Dr. Clarke’s Succession of Sac. Lit. Ammonius has been accused of forsaking Christianity at a later period of his life, but Eusebius wholly denies the accusation. Bk. vi. 19.

Christian faith. Under this teacher Origen acquired a very extensive knowledge of Greek literature, the works of Plato, Longinus, Nicomachus, (and other philosophers as well as Platonists) being constantly in his hands. In Ammonius's school, too, Origen's natural taste for a mystical and allegorical interpretation of Scripture was cultivated and strengthened.

His capacity for learning must have been very far beyond that of ordinary men, for in addition to the studies above named, Origen was well versed in rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, music, and in the general history of philosophy.¹ Well might Leonides be proud of his son, and doubtless his paternal love and solicitude led him into many a day-dream of his future honors and eminence. It was the Will of God, however, that Leonides should not behold the full fruit of that tender plant which gave so rich a promise—that child of whom S. Jerome has well said, that he was a great man even from childhood. The persecution under Severus has been already mentioned. Amongst the earliest of those who suffered from it

¹ Tillemont, *Vie d'Orig.* Ar. ii. "A man of such learning and universal erudition, that there were few things in Divinity, in human philosophy perhaps almost none, which he had not perfectly attained."—Vincent. *Lirin. Adv. Heres.* xvii.

in Alexandria, was Leonides, the father of Origen. From the time of his father's imprisonment the boy's ardour was aroused, he burned with a desire to share in Leonides' sufferings for the Faith, whether in bonds and captivity, or death itself. The happy companionship which the father and son had enjoyed in life would have been shared in death, if God whilst gathering the ripe harvest into His garner had not been pleased to leave the tender shoot to accomplish the work yet allotted to it. Origen's mother, after vainly employing all the influence her entreaties and tears might have to persuade Origen not to leave her and voluntarily join his father in prison, had recourse to stratagem, and by a series of ingenious maternal devices, succeeded in keeping him a prisoner at home. Thus thwarted in his desire of becoming a martyr, Origen was forced to content himself with writing to his father, encouraging him to bear his sufferings, and beseeching him not to be overcome with any tender recollections of his family, and the sorrow they must undergo in being deprived of their head and stay. "Take heed, father, that thou falter not because of us." How must Leonides' heart have been cheered by seeing such firm and earnest steadfastness in his son, hitherto unproved by real trial. Would not the dark and dreary prison walls fade from before his eyes whilst

his memory wandered back to the time when he had knelt beside his sleeping boy, and fondly kissed that breast which now was filled with two such strong passions, love for his earthly father, only subordinate to that mightier love he bore his Heavenly FATHER?

Hitherto GOD had mercifully heard his prayers—his Adamantius was indeed firm and steadfast as a rock in the Faith, and should he not trust his future course fearlessly to Him Who ordereth all things aright? The father and son never met more on earth, but both believed unfeignedly in that glorious doctrine of the Church, the Communion of Saints, and to such there is no separation; they are persuaded that as neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate the member of CHRIST from his Head—so in Him are all the faithful, living and dead, united and joined together inseparably and for ever.

Leonides died by the executioner's hand,¹ and his property was all confiscated, so that his family must have been left in need,² for Origen was not yet seventeen, and he had six younger brothers.

¹ Euseb. vi. 1.

² "He lost for CHRIST's sake, not only his father, but all his substance."—Vinc. de Lirin. Adv. Heres. xvii.

From this time we hear no more except of Origen himself: he was taken under the protection of a noble lady of Alexandria, a Christian, who assisted many of those who were suffering from persecution. She treated Origen as though he had been her son, and for a time he found a home in her house. Amongst those to whom his patroness extended her friendship was a certain Paul of Antioch, who both held and taught heretical doctrines. As Paul also lived with this lady, Origen was of necessity constrained to see him and converse with him frequently, but nothing could prevail upon him to hold any communion in prayer with Paul, or to join with the multitudes who won by his eloquence, flocked to hear him preach. Origen esteemed it an inviolable law of the Church, binding upon all her children, not to join in any schismatic or heretical proceedings, even though there might be much that was good mingled with them, and young as he was, he adhered steadily to his resolution. Whether this opposition offended his patroness and caused her to withdraw her favor from him, or whether Origen now felt equal to supporting himself and voluntarily left her care, we know not, but within a year of his father's death, he began to teach in a school which he opened on his own account, and by this means easily gained abundance for the supply of all his wants.

The singular ability¹ of the young teacher soon attracted attention, and many, by far his superiors in age and reputation, attended his lectures. Origen even then made a large share of his instructions to turn upon the doctrines of Christianity, mingled with philosophy and science. Not much more than a year after the establishment of this school, Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, proved how high an opinion he entertained of its young head, by offering to give him the superintendence of the great catechetical school of that city. This post having been filled by so great men as S. Clement of Alexandria and S. Pantænus was no light office to be undertaken by so young a man,² and perhaps had the state of public affairs been different, Ori-

¹ "His eloquence, why should I praise it? whose language was so pleasant, so soft, so sweet, that in my opinion not words, but, as it were, honey flowed from his mouth. What things were so hard to believe, which, with force of argument, he made not plain? What so difficult to bring to pass, which he made not to seem easy? . . . There was never any Doctor which read more of Holy Scripture."—Vinc. de Lirin. Adv. Heres. xvii.

² Origen was too young by seven years to be ordained deacon. The catechetical schools were quite under the superintendence of the Bishop, and from Origen and other examples, it is evident that the catechists were not necessarily ordained men, though in many cases both priests and deacons exercised the office.—See Bingh. Antiq. Bk. iii. 10.

gen might have hesitated before he undertook such a responsible duty ; but at this time the Christians were threatened with all the terrors of persecution, and the very eminence of the offered post made it one of danger.

A large number of disciples crowded around Origen, many of his former pupils still seeking to benefit by his instructions, which by their soundness and excellence, proved him most worthy of his office. At last the number of his catechumens increased to such an extent that the teacher deemed it his duty to give up teaching anything accept theology ; and abandoning all the other branches of science and literature in which he was so great a proficient, he thenceforth devoted himself to training his pupils in that knowledge which is above all other, that wisdom which is not of the world, but of God.

At the same time Origen resolved to sell his collection of profane authors, which was soon done, and thenceforward resisting all the temptations incidental to his age and his reputation, he gave himself up wholly to a life of asceticism, and a punctual fulfilment of the duties of his station. The Divine precepts concerning poverty Origen received in their most literal acceptance—at a later period he wrote thus : “ God giveth no portion on earth to His priests, because He Himself

would be their only portion ; therein lies the difference between them and those not His. Take good heed of this, ye that bear His authority, beware lest ye be rather the priests of Pharaoh than those of the LORD. For Pharaoh's priests had lands, and tended their lands more than their flocks, neglecting the law of GOD. But what saith our Blessed LORD to His priests ? He that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be My disciple ! I tremble as I speak these words, for in them I read my own accusation. How then ? do we presume to read and to preach these precepts to the people, while we not only do not renounce all we have, but even seek to obtain that which we have not ? If then we plainly see our duty, let us hasten to be no more Pharaoh's priests, but the priests of the LORD, like S. Peter, S. Paul, and S. John, who had neither silver nor gold, yet abounded in those riches which no earthly power can give."¹

Following this literal obedience Origen would have but one garment, and for some years he never would wear any shoes, in compliance with the words, "neither have two coats apiece," (S. Luke ix. 3;) "neither shoes," (x. 4.) Most of the night he spent in prayer and study, taking the scanty sleep which he permitted to himself, not in bed, but on the bare ground ; and he carried the same

¹ Orig. in Gen. quoted by Tillemont.

privations into his food, fasting frequently and rigidly, and at all times abstaining from wine and whatever might be considered as superfluous luxuries. To so great an extent did Origen carry his self-denying practices, that he was in danger of destroying the vigour of his constitution, and inducing disease of the lungs. It was probably in consequence of this that after a time he somewhat relaxed the severity of his ascetic discipline, but to the end of his life he scrupulously avoided all habits of self-indulgence whatever. It would be a worthy subject of inquiry, whether any person, who to any considerable extent gave way to personal indulgence, has been conspicuous for holiness of life, and eminent services offered to God. We do not by this allude to those men who evidently and notoriously consult first of all their own bodily gratification, and fall into sinful excesses, those of whom the Apostle says that "their God is their belly;" but those who pass on smoothly through life, placidly enjoying all luxury, and never knowing what it is to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST," according to the Apostolic precept. And that precept has ever been taken in its literal signification by those holy men whom God in His mercy has set before us as lights and examples. May we not all in our respective measures, learn to do more than we have hitherto done? earnestly

praying that we receive not our "good things" in this life only, forfeiting our eternal feast hereafter.

The actions of the Christian philosopher seem to have had as much influence on those who knew him, as his words ; many beholding how little he valued all those enjoyments and charms which this world offers, began to seek after that for which Origen was willing to sacrifice them, so that many, even heathen philosophers, were won over to the true faith, and more, some died for it.¹

When the persecution became urgent, several of Origen's disciples proved the sincerity of their belief, even to death, and received the seal of martyrdom. Fearless of danger, as might be expected of him who had burned to share Leonides' bonds, and esteeming life and its treasures as only a trust committed to his care until the Giver should reclaim it, Origen went about amongst the imprisoned brethren, imparting consolation and strength

¹ "What man ever more happy in his scholars ? For of his training grew up doctors, priests, confessors, and martyrs without number. Further, who is able to prosecute in words in what admiration he was with all men ? in what glory ? in what favour ? who that was but somewhat zealous of religion, repaired not to him from the farthest parts of the world ? What Christian did not venerate him almost as a prophet ? What philosopher did not honour him as a master ?"—Adv. Heres. xvii.

to them, when in consequence of the very stringent laws which Aquila, governor of Alexandria, put forth, scarce any Christian dared to leave his house, or attempt to visit the captives. But Origen not only ministered to them in prison, he even ventured to accompany the martyrs to their execution, encouraging them with his words and his embraces to the last, although in so doing he often was in peril of his own life, the savage mob frequently pelting him with stones, and threatening him violently. His Christian kindness was not shown only to his own disciples, all shared it who stood in need, but for these especially his solicitude was great, that they should not fall away. His exceeding gentleness and affection for them won the love of all his disciples, and they richly rewarded his care, who were ready to lay down their lives for his and their God. The first of Origen's pupils who received the crown of martyrdom was Plutarch, whose friends regarding Origen as the cause of his death, in having made him a Christian, set upon him at the time of the execution, and nearly succeeded in killing him. Heracles, the brother of Plutarch, escaped with his life, and continued Origen's friend and pupil for many years. Four, Serenus, Heraclides, Basilides, and Heron were beheaded, another also called Serenus, and a woman named Herais perished by fire, wherein Origen

himself says she received her baptism.¹ At last the heathen inhabitants of Alexandria became so infuriated against Origen that they set a guard of soldiers to trace him from house to house when he by concealment tried to elude pursuit. And wherever he was seen bitter reviling and insult awaited him. Epiphanius says that Origen was dragged about the streets of Alexandria, and that on one occasion his persecutors shaved his head after the custom of the Egyptian priests, and then stationed him on the steps of the temple dedicated to their god Serapis, to distribute palm branches to the passers by. Origen apparently acquiesced, but taking the branches and offering them to the people he cried aloud, "Come hither and receive these branches, not in the name of your idol, but in the Name of CHRIST the LORD."²

It is probable that Origen continued to lead a disturbed and uneasy life until, by the death of the Emperor Severus, A.D. 211, the persecution of the Christians was put an end to, and the furious passions of his son and successor, the inhuman fratricide Caracalla, vented themselves indiscriminately on all who came under his displeasure,—heathens faring now as ill as the Christians had done. The city of Alexandria paid in blood for that which she

¹ Euseb. vi. 4.

² Epiph. Hæres. 64. Quoted by Cave and Tillemont.

had caused to flow from the followers of CHRIST ; for Caracalla ordered a general massacre, and placing himself securely in the temple of Serapis, he superintended the odious deed ; many thousand citizens perishing, without regard to their guilt or innocence.¹ Very soon after Caracalla's accession, Origen made a journey to Rome, having a great desire to see so celebrated a place. Zephyrinus was then Bishop of Rome, having succeeded Victor in the year 201 ; and he continued to preside over that Church until the year 218.

However, Origen soon returned to Alexandria, and, at the request of Demetrius, he resumed his labours as catechist with renewed energy. But now the number of his catechumens became so large, that his whole time was engrossed in teaching : so that he was unable to continue his own studies, or to give the needful time to prayer and devotional exercises. Feeling that, if he would impart to others, he himself must be perpetually drawing fresh supplies from the Fountain Head, Origen resolved on taking his friend and pupil Heracles (brother to the martyred Plutarch) as his assistant ; and accordingly he committed to the care of Heracles the younger catechumens, taking upon himself their instruction as they advanced deeper in the mysteries of the faith. It would

¹ Gibbon, i. 6.

appear that Origen had now returned to his former habit of instructing his disciples also in philosophy and science, warning them that all knowledge, if rightly applied, would assist them in their search after a better and higher wisdom. Eusebius says that he considered literature "as no small advantage in understanding the holy Scriptures; whence also he considered the study of political and philosophical matters particularly necessary for himself."¹

The assistance of Heracles enabled Origen to devote much more time to a critical study of the Scriptures, in furtherance of which he made the laborious effort of learning the Hebrew language, collecting and collating all the versions of the Holy Scriptures which had hitherto existed. These consisted—1st, of a version by one Aquila, a proselyte Jew, who lived in the time of Hadrian; 2ndly, the Septuagint; 3rdly, that of Symmachus, an Ebionite, who probably made his translation in the time of Marcus Aurelius; 4thly, the version of Theodotion, made during Commodus' reign; and two more versions, one discovered at Jericho, the other at Nicopolis, in Actium. After years of indefatigable study, the result appeared in a work called the Hexapla, which consisted of all these versions, collated and arranged in parallel columns, with the Hebrew text. Different editions of the same work

¹ Euseb. vi. 18.

bore the name of the Octapla and the Tetrapla. The value of this work, for the better understanding of Holy Scripture, was inestimable; and all, even his most determined enemies, have united in owning that the Church derived from Origen a lasting benefit therein. S. Jerome himself has said that he could be content to bear all the load of envy cast upon Origen's name, if he could also have his skill and knowledge of the Scriptures.¹

Meanwhile, all ranks and classes of men flocked more and more to hear the famous Christian teacher; even eminent heathen philosophers not hesitating to own that they learned much in their own department from him. "Words cannot describe," writes Vincent of Lerins, "how every one loved, esteemed, and admired him. All those who aimed at holy things hastened from all points to see him. All Christians respected him as a prophet, all philosophers owned him as their master. His fame reached even to the imperial palaces." Among those to whom Origen's instructions proved most valuable, was Ambrose, an Alexandrian of high birth, and great wealth. He was led to know the truth by Origen, "and as if illuminated by a light beaming on his mind, became attached to the sound doctrine of the Church."²

From this time a warm and active friendship

¹ Præf. in Quæst. in Gen. Quoted by Cave.

² Euseb. vi. 18.

existed between Ambrose and Origen, who were inspired with a kindred zeal for religion and Biblical researches. All the time that they spent together was devoted to such objects; as they walked together, or sat at meals, their talk turned on religious matters; their sleep was diminished, in order that great part of the night might be devoted to secret studies, and every occupation was consecrated with prayer.

Whilst thus happily and usefully employed, a new tribute to the fame of Origen was offered. Gellius, governor of Arabia, sent one of his officers with letters both to the Bishop Demetrius and to the Præfect of Egypt, desiring that the celebrated Origen, of whom he had heard so much, might speedily be sent to him, and instruct him in the Christian faith. Origen undertook the mission, but with what results we do not learn from the ancient historians.¹

¹ Mosheim supposes Origen's mission to have been to a tribe of wandering Arabs.—Eccles. Hist. Bk. i. 1.

CHAPTER II.

“ God strikes His Church, but ’tis to this intent,
To make, not marre her, by this punishment ;
So when He gives thee bitter pills, be sure,
’Tis not to poyson, but to make thee pure.”

HERRICK’S *Noble Numbers*.

CARACALLA COMES TO ALEXANDRIA.—ORIGEN RETIRES TO CÆSAREA.—IS RECALLED BY THE BISHOP DEMETRIUS.—ELAGABALUS.—ALEXANDER SEVERUS.—MAMMÆA.—SENDS FOR ORIGEN.—HIS COMMENTARIES.—ALLEGORICAL EXPOSITION.—HE IS ORDAINED PRIEST AT CÆSAREA.—DISPLEASURE OF DEMETRIUS.—ORIGEN COMBATS VARIOUS HERESIES.—HE IS CONDEMNED BY A SYNOD.—DEFENDED BY THE PRELATES OF PALESTINE.—BANISHED FROM ALEXANDRIA.—SETTLES AT CÆSAREA.—HIS SCHOOL.—DEATH OF BISHOP DEMETRIUS.

SOME time after Origen had returned to Alexandria, and quietly resumed his usual course of life, the city was menaced with the approach of the Emperor Caracalla, whose presence was always a death-warrant to numbers of his subjects. Accordingly Origen resolved on leaving Alexandria, and retiring into Palestine, he established himself at Cæsarea. Here he met with a warm reception from the Bishop Theoctistus, as also from all the

other neighbouring prelates, who even invited him to expound the Scriptures to the people in their presence. But when this came to the ears of Demetrius he saw reason to be dissatisfied, and required Origen to return to Alexandria, which he accordingly did, proving himself not less great in his readiness to obey lawful authority, than in his fitness to teach and command. This probably occurred about the year 216; a twelvemonth before the life of the monster Caracalla was terminated by the hand of an assassin, the tool of Macrinus, one of the Prætorian prefects, who after a brief assumption of sovereignty was defeated by an eastern army, and Elagabalus, the first Asiatic emperor, for a short time degraded the Roman purple with his superstition and effeminacy.

The Christians underwent no persecution at the hands of Elagabalus, who was absorbed in the performance of his own vile and contemptible religious rites, offered to the sun, he himself bearing his name, (derived from two Syriac words, *Ela* a god, and *Gabal*, to form,) in right of his pontificate. Whilst his unparalleled profligacy revolted even the degenerate Romans, still less could they stand by and witness unmoved the insults he offered to their gods,—the Palladium, that sacred image of Minerva, hitherto shrouded in revered mystery, —was publicly brought forth as the bride of the

Asiatic idol, and then scornfully rejected for the Syriac goddess Astarte. The impotence of the offended deities who could not revenge themselves would naturally weaken their influence, and men would involuntarily turn a more favorable glance to that pure faith so totally opposed in every possible way to the disgusting rites of Elagabalus. In the year 222 the unworthy Syrian monarch was murdered by the Prætorian guards, and his throne was filled by his cousin, Alexander Severus. Mammæa, Severus's mother, was not only a woman of powerful mind and judgment, but also distinguished for her piety and religion.¹ Most of the ecclesiastical historians agree in believing her to have been a Christian,² and although the blessing of the Founder of that Faith is especially promised to the humble and lowly of heart, still we are unfortunately too familiar with the union of professed Christianity and the most extensively grasping ambition, to found a contrary supposition upon the strength with which that passion displayed itself in Mammæa. By some it has been supposed that Origen converted the royal matron, for being at Antioch with the emperor, Mammæa sent a guard of honour to Alexandria to request the celebrated catechist to visit her, and give her the benefit of his instruc-

¹ Euseb. vi. 21.

² Tillemont. Hist. des Empereurs. Vol. III. 185.

tions in sacred things. Origen complied with the request, and accompanied the escort to Antioch, where he remained some time, teaching and interpreting, but in all things seeking not his own glory but the Glory of God ; and the visit ended, he returned quietly to Alexandria, and resumed his usual occupations. To these was now added the laborious undertaking of writing commentaries on a considerable portion of the Holy Scriptures, a work which suited well with Origen's own critical inclinations, besides which he had the additional stimulus afforded by his friend Ambrose, who was exceedingly keen in the matter, and not only forwarded Origen's labours by his intreaties, but substantially, by furnishing the necessary pecuniary means for the support of seven secretaries, who took it by turn to write from his dictation, while as many copyists were retained to make fair copies of these notes, which were written in short hand. It is probable that the hearty zeal of Ambrose in this cause, led him personally to share his friend's labours. The industry with which their labours were prosecuted is sufficiently evidenced by their produce. Portions of his commentaries on the sacred books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, First of Samuel, Psalms, Canticles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, S. Matthew, S. John, the Acts, Epistle to the Romans, and Hebrews, are

still extant in the original Greek ; fragments in Latin translations remain from Numbers, Judges, Kings, Job, Isaiah, and S. Luke.¹ The tone of Origen's commentaries is entirely allegorical ; out of every fact, he deduces some spiritual meaning, often most ingenious and beautiful, but of course admitting a system which must be liable to abuse. Thus in treating of the birth of Moses, and the condition of his countrymen at that time, Origen 'finds a series of hidden meanings. King Pharaoh is the devil, the male and female offspring of the Israelites are the rational and animal faculties of the soul, the devil, as the enemy of man wishing to destroy the former, by which the soul may be led to seek heavenly things, and to preserve the more hurtful propensities alive in man.

Pursuing the same strain, Origen sees in Pharaoh's daughter, the Church, who leaves the home of her heathen father, and comes to bathe in the river, that is the Baptismal font. Her discovery of Moses he explains as the Church finding the law ; the ark, daubed with pitch and bitumen, being the deformities and obscurities added by the Jews, by which its beauty had been concealed ; and thus it necessarily continued till the Church, formed out of, and coming from among the Gentiles, receives Moses, the law, as her own child, which being given

¹ Clarke's Suc. Sacred Lit.

into the care of those who are spiritual, they strip it of its carnal glosses, and give it its proper spiritual interpretation. Then it acquires strength and excellence; and thus Moses grows up, and becomes, through the means of the Christian Church, more respectable even in the sight of the Jews, according to the saying of Moses,—“I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (Deut. xxxii. 21.)”¹ Nor were these commentaries the only production of Origen’s active mind; Epiphanius says that he wrote six thousand volumes.² It is well, however, to remember, that in those times an individual homily or epistle was frequently called a book, which makes it not impossible that the affirmation might be true: a supposition which we could not possibly entertain on any other ground. Very many of his writings, which are named by authors nearer his own time, are now lost. Of some we shall again have occasion to speak.

¹ This specimen of Origen’s style of comment on the Holy Scriptures is borrowed from Dr. Clarke’s *Chronological Succession of Ecclesiastical Literature*.

² “Origen knew the Scriptures by heart, and in the study of explaining them he toiled night and day; a thousand homilies, and more, has he uttered in the Church, besides publishing innumerable commentaries.”—S. Jerom. *epist.* 65, *ad Pammach.*

In the year 228, however, a new interruption broke in upon the life of study and retirement in which Origen delighted. Strife and heresies were rife in Achaia, and the Catholic party summoned Origen to come and lend the aid of his well-known abilities and patient meekness, to restore peace and unity. It seems probable that his friend Ambrose was the instigator of this request.¹ Accordingly, being furnished with an ecclesiastical letter from Demetrius, his Bishop, Origen departed; going through Palestine, and stopping at Cæsarea, where he had already met with so much respect and kindness. Nor had time and absence lessened the kindly feelings entertained for the eminent Alexandrian by the prelates of Palestine. They saw fit to mark their esteem for him yet more decidedly, by ordaining him Priest; thereby giving him far greater authority in his peace-making embassy than as a layman he could possess.

The Bishops who thus signally showed the high estimation in which they held Origen, were Theoclistus, Bishop of Cæsarea, and Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem. The latter, as we have already seen, was an old friend and fellow disciple of Origen, to whom he writes, "For this thou knowest was the Divine Will, that the friendship which has existed between us from our ancestors should remain un-

¹ Tillemont. *Vie d'Orig.* Ar. xv.

shaken, rather that it should grow warmer and firmer.”¹ In the same epistle, Alexander calls Origen his “lord and brother surpassing all.”

But the event of his ordination called forth a beginning of troubles and persecutions which continued to harass Origen during the remainder of his life, and to be a fruitful source of contention after his death. Whether there was really any breach of ecclesiastical order in the two Bishops’ thus ordaining a man not under their jurisdiction, we cannot here decide; it does not appear that there was any canonical law against so doing;² neither did any of his contemporary opponents allege this as a ground of complaint: not even Demetrius himself, whose indignation carried him beyond the bounds of moderation in expressing his displeasure, attacking both Origen and the Bishops of Jerusalem and Cæsarea with great violence. Most ecclesiastical historians follow Eusebius in attributing this otherwise unaccountable burst of wrath to an unworthy jealousy of Origen, whose fame, in matters concerning the Church and her doctrines, eclipsed that of his diocesan. Alexander took up the defence of his friend warmly, and he wrote a public

¹ Euseb. vi. 14.

² In the fourth century, the Church forbade a Bishop to ordain the *clerk* of another diocese, but no mention is there made of *laymen*.—See Tillemont, Hist. Eccles. Vol. III. 527.

epistle to Demetrius, showing that that Bishop had himself, at the very time of Origen's ordination, borne witness to his worthiness of the priestly office, in the ecclesiastical letter with which he had furnished him.

Whilst waiting in Palestine, Origen was not idle in the cause of the Church. He contended earnestly with one Bassus, a heretic; and in the course of the argument quoted the apocryphal book of Susanna as an authority. A learned Christian, Julius Africanus, who was famous for his knowledge of Scripture, wrote in consequence to Origen, denying the authenticity of that history altogether. Origen wrote a full reply, which has been praised as a "model of that Christian charity with which the eminent sons of the Church should conduct any controversy which may arise among themselves on points of learning or discipline."¹ The great humility of his character is also shown in this reply; for Africanus, having expressed his surprise that so learned a man should make such a blunder, Origen answers that he does not esteem himself either sufficiently learned or penetrating to decide such matters, but that he would not presume to set up his judgment against the general opinion of the Church Catholic.

At Ephesus he seems to have fallen in with an-

¹ Tillemont.

other opponent, "a heretic whom I met at Ephesus," he says, "never would enter into any conference with me, and even avoided opening his lips in my presence. But he composed a conference between us, wherein he wrote what he pleased and dispersed it amongst his followers, sending it to Rome, and doubtless to other places also. When I came to Antioch he insulted me openly with this document, disseminating it so freely that some of our brethren obtained it. Accordingly at Antioch before a large concourse of people I asked him to account for his imposture, which he impudently maintained. But I challenged him to produce his composition before all present, that all who knew my doctrine and that which I teach, might judge whether the writing were genuine or not. But he never dared to produce the document, so that every one was convinced of his treachery."¹ This interview probably took place on his return from Achaia, after which Origen resumed his school at Alexandria, and also his commentaries—for a time in comparative peace, which however proved only to be a lull before the storm. The SAVIOUR, he said, held back the winds and the waves. But after a while the suppressed anger of Demetrius broke out. He summoned a synod, composed of Egyptian Bishops and Priests, who condemned not only Ori-

¹ Quoted by Tillemont. Ar. xvi.

gen's ordination but his doctrines, and forbade him to teach any more in Alexandria, or even to inhabit the city. It is probable that the condemnation of his doctrines was founded upon certain of his writings which had been tampered with, and interpolated by his enemies, for Origen complains much of this injustice. But Demetrius was not satisfied with the results of this Synod; summoning a few Egyptian prelates he constituted a second, and pronounced Origen to be deposed from the priesthood, and even, according to S. Jerome, to be excommunicate.

This sentence Demetrius promulgated throughout the Church. Those Bishops who were acquainted with the real circumstances, the prelates of Palestine, Arabia, Phenicia, and Achaia, refused their assent, and defended Origen to the utmost of their power; but the more numerous body of the Church accepted the sentence of Demetrius and confirmed his condemnation.¹ "What did Origen get as the reward of all his toil and labour?" asks S. Jerome. "He is condemned by the Bishop Demetrius, and excepting the Prelates of Palestine,

¹ On a similar occasion S. Augustine wrote, "They believed the letters of the council and they were right. Though the letters were false they did not wound their conscience, for the letters affirmed nothing against the Gospel, they only affirmed that of a man of which a man is capable."

Arabia, Phenicia, and Achaia, he is condemned by consent of the whole world. Rome even summons her council against him, not that he taught any new dogmas, not that his doctrines were heretical, as those who howled at him like infuriated dogs would have us believe, but because they could not endure the brilliance of his eloquence and of his science, and because when he spoke, all besides seemed dumb."¹

It was in the year 231 that Origen was thus ungratefully banished from the city, of which he had been the brightest ornament. The command of his catechetical school he made over to Heracles, who had for some time shared his labours, and then departed for Palestine, visiting both the Bishops of Jerusalem and Cæsarea.

He finally settled at Cæsarea, and there resumed his vocation as a teacher, soon calling around him a school no less celebrated than his former one at Alexandria, not only the residents of the city, but innumerable others from elsewhere leaving their homes to attend his lectures.² Amongst the pupils of whom Origen boasted at this time were Athenodorus, and his more celebrated brother S. Gregory Thaumaturgus, afterwards Bishop of Neocæsarea and Dionysius, afterwards Bishop of Alexandria "as if," says an ecclesiastical historian, "at the very

¹ Quoted by Tillemont.

² Euseb. vi. 30.

moment that he was banished from Alexandria, deprived by a council of his office, and deposed by his Bishop from the priesthood, when Rome and nearly all the world pronounced him unworthy of the Church's communion, God would specially sanction and favorably mark his teaching at Cæsarea, by sending him the two greatest of all his disciples, and justify his faith by using him as the instrument to lead them into the Church, and to render them capable of the functions of the priesthood and episcopacy."¹ Firmilian, Bishop of Cappadocia, likewise contracted a warm friendship for Origen, whom he frequently visited at Cæsarea, at other times prevailing on him to go into his province, and lend his aid to the edification of the Church there. Origen seems to have borne his trials meekly, he wrote to his friends at Alexandria, complaining of the injustice with which Demetrius had treated him, adding that he wishes to be moderate in his language, and to leave his enemies and calumniators to God, thinking himself bound rather to pity, than to hate them, and choosing rather to pray God to pardon them than to wish them evil, as we are born rather to bless than to curse. Surely these sentiments do not justify the words of an Alexandrian council, that "Origen having fallen from heaven to earth like lightning, as it is written of the devil

¹ Tillemont.

his father, went to Cæsarea where breathing only fire and passion against the truth, he wholly threw aside the mask which he had worn hitherto, and vomited forth on paper the foul black poison on which he had fed with so much avidity and joy.”¹ Within a year of his banishment, Demetrius died, and was succeeded by Heracles, Origen’s friend; who was both more able and more humble-minded than his predecessor. The new head of the Cæsarean school was once more a pupil of Origen, Dionysius, who on Heracles’ death became Bishop of Alexandria. Both these circumstances combined to give Origen some repose, and he appears to have led a comparatively quiet and peaceful life at Cæsarea.

¹ Quoted by Tillemont.

CHAPTER III.

“Blest are they
Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong
Than to do wrong, albeit themselves have erred.”

The Excursion.

PERSECUTION UNDER MAXIMIN.—POLITICAL COMMOTIONS.—
GORDIAN.—BERYLLUS, BISHOP OF BOSTRA.—PHILIP.—
DECIUS.—SEVERE PERSECUTION.—GENERAL CONSTERNA-
TION.—S. BABYLAS.—ORIGEN A CONFESSOR.—LIBERATED
BY THE DEATH OF DECIUS.—ORIGEN DIES AT TYRE.—RE-
VIEW OF HIS CHARACTER.—HIS IMPUTED ERRORS.—OPIN-
IONS CONCERNING HIM.

THE reign of Alexander Severus was favorable to the Christian religion. We have already seen that his mother Mammæa (to whose influence the emperor was but too subject) was, if not a professed Christian, at all events favorable to the followers of the Crucified SAVIOUR. Alexander himself paid great attention to the outward forms of religion, beginning each day with devotional exercises in a chapel, or temple annexed to the palace. His religion appears to have been a worship of whatever was great, or good, or exalted;

for his temple was filled with the images of numerous heathen gods, and celebrated men, amongst whom, and together with Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, and Alexander the Great, was enshrined the Blessed REDEEMER of the world. During the life of Alexander, therefore, the Christians gained both in strength and in esteem, but A.D. 235, the mild and gentle Alexander and his haughty mother, were both murdered by Maximin, a Thracian of ignoble birth, who had been a soldier under the command of Severus and Caracalla, and who now assumed the imperial purple, which like Caracalla, he soon drenched in blood. Every one to whom he could attribute the slightest connexion with the late emperor, was regarded by this tyrant as deserving of death, and as the Christians had met with favor at the hands of Alexander (many being found even amongst his household), they incurred the unrelenting hatred of the despot. It is supposed that Origen was one object of special persecution, but he was preserved by God's Mercy, and for some time found a refuge in the house of a Christian lady named Juliana.

Amongst those who underwent persecution at this time was Ambrose, the friend of Origen, who had for some time been in deacon's orders. His large possessions were pillaged, and he was separated from his wife and children, and together with

Protoplus, a priest of Cæsarea, was carried about from city to city in an ignominious and miserable captivity. Nothing daunted, however, Ambrose bore all willingly for His Sake, Whom he had served faithfully for many years. Origen wrote to encourage the captives, and exhort them to persevere unto the end, especially Ambrose, who had so many ties to bind him to earth. But it pleased God to restore him, a noble confessor to his family, having proved his willingness to resign every thing. Ambrose lived some time longer, and his friendship for Origen continued as long as his life. After a time, the general state of tumult and disturbance slackened the hand of persecution which oppressed the Christians. Maximin's throne was disputed by the two aristocratic Gordians, in 237, and after their brief reign (little more than a month), the senate raised Maximus and Balbinus to the chief sovereignty; Maximus marched against the tyrant, then besieging the town of Aquileia, and before any engagement took place Maximin fell by the hands of some of his own soldiers. His successor, Gordian (grandson to the Proconsul of that name, who for so short a time had worn the purple), was an amiable and promising young man. During his reign of four years, the Church had no external warfare to contend against, and Origen appears to have remained engrossed as usual with his double

duties of teaching and writing. One interruption, however, occurred. Beryllus, the Bishop of Bostra, in Arabia, began to propagate heretical doctrines concerning the Divinity of the SAVIOUR, asserting that He had no existence before the Incarnation, and also that He had no personal Divinity, but only a Divinity derived from the FATHER. The Arabian Bishops, having vainly endeavoured to convince Beryllus of his errors, sent to Origen, as more able than themselves to confute the heresy, and reclaim their erring brother. Nor were their hopes proved to be too sanguine. Origen listened patiently to all that his opponent had to say, and then replying to him with a superiority of wisdom and intellect, only equalled by his forbearance and charity, he effectually proved to Beryllus the weakness of his heretical propositions, and restored him to the Church. It is to be feared that controversy rarely has so happy a result as in this case; Beryllus became a sincere friend of Origen's, and a correspondence began between them, in the course of which he expressed earnestly his gratitude for the important service Origen had rendered him.

In the year 244, a new murder placed another emperor on the throne; Philip, the Arabian, having won the favor of the army, who assassinating their young unwarlike prince, made the son of a robber their sovereign. It has been asserted by some,

that Philip claims the honor of being the first Christian emperor;¹ but there is little reason to believe the assertion, nor is it very desirable for the credit of the faith, to prove him to have professed Christianity, inasmuch as he continued to pay exceeding reverence to all the heathen rites of Rome. Undoubtedly Philip did not molest the Christians, and apparently received without displeasure an epistle from Origen, who also addressed the Empress Severa. We do not know on what occasion, in either case, but these facts probably served to strengthen the report that Philip himself was a Christian. It was during his reign that a pernicious heresy sprung up in Arabia, teaching that the soul perished with the body at the hour of death, and that together they would assume a new life at the resurrection. A synod was called to put down this heresy, in which the learning and judgment of Origen were again victorious, and the newly born heresy was rooted out. To this period also must be referred one of his most important writings, the refutation of an elaborate attack upon Christianity, made by Celsus,² an Epicurean phi-

¹ Euseb. vi. 34.

² "Of all the objectors to Christianity, Celsus is the most crafty and subtle. He wrote with the most refined fallacy that sophistry could invent, with an air of positiveness to impose upon the vulgar, and all the advantages that wit and fine

losopher of no mean talents, all of which he brought to bear against the true faith. Origen's reply was not less able than the many other combats he undertook in behalf of the Church. But one of the most grievous times of Christian persecution was drawing nigh.

Philip's reign lasted but four years. Murder and usurpation had become the habitual stepping-stones to the throne. All the natural ties of loyalty and allegiance had been severed till they were no longer felt ; and every soldier, as he looked at his emperor, once in his own position, must have felt that, had he equal power, he had an equal right to reign. Decius was almost forced by the army to accept the sovereignty. He hesitated ; but, having once consented, there was no alternative but a battle, in which Philip fell, and Decius became emperor, A.D. 249. Short as was his reign, it is marked to the ecclesiastical historian as a period of the most unrelenting and bitter persecution ever endured by the Christians.

raillery could give ; he was also master of all the difficulties that an extensive knowledge, seconded by artifice and management, could object. On the other side, Origen, with all the force and solidity of right reason, reduces every argument to its true principles, follows his adversary step by step, convicts him of falsehood in point of fact, sets in the true light things which his adversary disguised or smothered, and establishes the truth of the Christian doctrine by the evidence of facts, and of its history."—Butler in S. Leon. April 22.

Decius was in every way an uncompromising enemy of the Church; and the favor which she and her children had met with at the hands of his predecessor, Philip, was yet a further stimulant to his fury. Further accounts of this persecution will be found in the lives of S. Cyprian, S. Gregory, and S. Dionysius. It began almost directly upon the elevation of Decius, and the consternation spread over the Christian world was great. No one felt secure; any person was at all moments liable to be accused or betrayed by those on whom he depended most; and, once convicted of the crime of Christianity, no tortures were too horrible to be inflicted. The great aim of the persecutors was so to prolong and diversify the agonies which the martyrs endured, that at last, worn out with suffering, they might fall, and deny CHRIST. So many fled, that the deserts became peopled; and yet soon the prisons overflowed to such an extent, that the public buildings were appropriated by the magistrates to receive their captives. Neither sex nor age availed as a defence; old men, women, and children met with the same fate. S. Babylas, Bishop of Antioch,¹ perished in

¹ S. Babylas was raised to the See of Antioch A.D. 239, and ruled it most admirably until the Decian persecution, when he incurred the emperor's personal displeasure, by refusing him admittance into his Church during the celebration of public

his dungeon, having witnessed a good confession ; and S. Alexander of Jerusalem, Origen's faithful and well-tried friend, received his crown of martyrdom. Origen himself was taken, and cast into an under-ground dungeon, an iron collar about his neck, and heavy chains weighing down his limbs. Here he underwent the torture of the rack, and other torments, being constantly threatened with the flames. But the same spirit which, when a boy, had made him not afraid to die, had grown up in him ; and he felt himself no less under God's loving care and protection in his loathsome prison, than when he had been the honored guest of royal palaces. He knew his hope and confidence were

worship. Shortly after this event, S. Babylas was beheaded, together with three young men, brothers, named Urbanus, Prilidianus, and Epolonius, who were his spiritual children. S. Babylas requested that they might be executed first, lest they should be appalled at beholding his death ; and as he saw them fall, he exclaimed, " Behold, I and the children which the LORD hath given me ! " He further requested his friends that he might be buried in his chains, as trophies of victory over sin and Satan. In the reign of Julian the Apostate, a heathen oracle at Daphne, in Antioch, was rendered speechless until the bones of this martyr were removed, which was done at the emperor's command ; the Christians making the removal a festival, singing psalms beside the coffin as they bore it, and repeating, " Confounded be all they that worship carved images. "—S. Chrys. Hom. de S. Babyl.

fixed where alone they could never be disappointed; and, strong in the faith, he bore all that his enemies could inflict without faltering. We can imagine that, when he heard of the deliverance, one after another, of his friends from their bonds, and their entrance into their heavenly rest, his heart must sometimes have yearned for the silver cord of his own existence likewise to be loosed, that his spirit might return to God Who gave it. But in His All-seeing Mercy, God often appoints to His children a very different lot from that they would have sought for themselves; and thus he who had coveted the martyr's crown so early, several times saw it within his reach, without being permitted, as it were, to stretch out his hand to take it.

Some time before, Origen had spoken in words very applicable now to himself. "Perhaps He Who sees all things, knows that we are not able to suffer martyrdom. Nevertheless, the LORD knoweth those that are His; He has treasures where we should not think it; for GOD seeth not as man seeth. For my part, I doubt not that many here are known to Him only, who in His Sight are already martyrs, by the testimony to the faith their heart gives, ready to shed their blood for the Name of the LORD JESUS so soon as it shall be asked of them. I doubt not many here present bear His

cross, and follow Him.”¹ The persecutors were reserving Origen for execution, when the death of Decius, (A.D. 251,) two years after his accession, arrested the persecution, and Origen was set at liberty.

We learn little more concerning him. He was now an old man, and much shattered by all the exertions and sufferings he had endured ; and probably he was no longer equal to any very active efforts for the cause he loved, but he continued to write epistles, “full of benefit to those needing consolation,”² to the last. It was at Tyre, in the year 254, that Origen entered into the rest he had so ardently desired, being in his seventieth year. His tomb was pointed out, in a Church in Tyre, as one of the leading objects of interest in that city, for many years after his death.

Such are the records which have reached us of the life and actions of a man who has excited discussion and controversy from his own day until the present time ; defended by saints and martyrs, and by saints and martyrs condemned : a fact which at least calls upon us to pause, before we unhesitatingly receive and adopt all he has taught.

To his many noble and saint-like qualities we cannot be blind. His early enthusiasm in the cause of religion remained unaltered ; suffering no

¹ Tenth Hom. in Num.

² Euseb. vi. 39.

diminution from persecution, torture, or from the increase of years, which removes the first ardour of many powerful emotions. Of his charity, meekness, and gentleness, we have abundant proofs; nor less so of his exceeding humility. Caressed by the great, even by royalty itself, — receiving signal marks of honor alike from the Christian Bishop and the heathen philosopher, and that at an age when vanity and ambition are peculiarly alive, — we find him persevering in the duties of the station to which God had called him; never aspiring to rise above it, — never, in short, coveting any forbidden fortune, except when in his boyhood he would fain have snatched the martyr's crown. Humility has rarely been a feature amongst heretics and schismatics, either in past or present times.¹ “A man so thoroughly Catholic in all the qualities of his mind as Origen,” says a Church historian, “may hold some false, and therefore heretical opinions, for

¹ Origen's humility has been contrasted with the pride of Tertullian. We surely cannot but be struck with the important fact, that the one died in communion with the Church, whilst of the other we have every reason to fear that he was, up to the time of his death, still a voluntary outcast from her sacred pale.

“Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;
High is the roof there, but the gate is low.”

HERRICK.

he is but man ; but he cannot be a heretic, for he is neither arrogant nor obstinate in his errors.”¹

“There is none good but One.” All men are liable to fall into error, nor is it wise or well to refuse to see the truth, whilst, as S. Jerome says in writing concerning Origen, “Let us not imitate his faults, whose virtues we cannot reach.” God permitted this celebrated man to be one of His chosen instruments in leading many from darkness to light, and He has said, that “he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”² Whilst therefore He gave to Origen great works to do for the good of the Church, He has also made him a warning to us, not to be led away by a speculative, over curious spirit, to pry too deeply into mysteries hidden from our sight. A penetrating, imaginative mind, doubtless, led Origen to indulge in the investigation of matters too deep for him, and so to open the door to condemnation of himself, and detriment to the cause which above all others he loved to advance.

The doctrinal errors of which Origen has been accused, have been summed up as follows :

1st. That he maintained an inequality in the hypostases of the HOLY TRINITY. To this it is answered, that in contending against the Sabellian

¹ Tillemont.

² S. James v. 20.

heresy, which confounded the number and difference of the Three Holy Persons, Origen attempted to express himself more definitely than seems consistent with the orthodox doctrine on this head; but an effectual proof of the injustice of calling him the originator of the Arian heresy (as has been done) is, that S. Athanasius not only never accuses him of holding doubtful doctrine concerning the HOLY TRINITY, but expressly quotes him as an authority in this very matter.

2nd. That the souls of men do pre-exist.

3rd. That through their fault and negligence, they appear here, inhabitants of the earth, clothed with terrestrial bodies.

4th. That in the resurrection we shall be clothed with heavenly or ethereal bodies.

5th. That after long time the damned shall be delivered from their torments, and try their fortunes in such regions of the world as their nature fits them for.

6th. That the earth, after conflagration, shall become habitable again, and be the mansion of men and other animals, and this in eternal vicissitudes.¹

To these charges we must first reply, that there

¹ Letter of Resolution concerning Origen and the chief of his Opinions, A.D. 1661. In this letter will also be found an elaborate answer to each of these charges.

is no doubt very much has been promulgated under Origen's name, which he not only had not taught, but would have rejected with as much indignation as he did the sayings imputed to him by the Ephesian heretic, before mentioned. If this false interpolation and imputation took place in the author's lifetime, how much more easily after his death? Many of the Fathers assure us, that this was the case with Origen's writings. Vincencius Lirinensis says: "The books passing abroad under his name, are a great temptation, being read as his, so that although Origen gave no cause of originating erroneous doctrine, yet his authority should seem to have been the occasion, why the error hath been received."¹ A learned Bishop of the middle ages writes: "For my part, I affirm of Origen, that either he never wrote these things, but that they were wickedly forged by heretics, and fathered upon his name, or if he did write them, he wrote them not as his own judgment, but as the opinions of others."²

Again, it was extremely probable that one of so subtle and refined a mind, delighting in allegorical and remote mystery, should be liable to broach notions, which being quite misunderstood and perverted by dissimilar minds, might be made to bear

¹ Adv. Heres. xvii.

² Bp. Haymo, of Halberstadt, quoted by Cave.

a very different meaning to that they were originally intended to convey. "To heads unused to such theories, they would first appear very strange, and then false, because we are very unwilling that any thing should be true, which we have never heard of before, and which we do not now understand."¹

Again still further, Origen himself expressly states, that many things which he propounded, were not offered as matters of dogmatic assertion, but as suggestions open to discussion; many times not intended to go beyond the friends with whom he communicated freely on these subjects. He reproaches Ambrose with having published abroad such matters which were not intended for any but his private consideration. Were all the doubts and difficulties that have presented themselves to earnest and thoughtful men, and those the most Catholic among us, to be published as their avowed opinions, who could escape the charge of heterodoxy?

At no time has Origen wanted hearty and sincere defenders, from his own time to the present, numbering amongst these Eusebius, S. Pamphilus (who defended him upon the strong ground of his own writings), Rufinus, and at one time S. Jerome, who afterwards became his bitter enemy.

¹ Letter of Resolution, p. 11.

S. Jerome owns that one source of his great aversion for Origen, was the extravagant admiration bestowed on him by many, proving Origen's own words: "There are many, who esteeming me more than I merit, speak too highly of my teaching and of my doctrine, and who say and publish things that I behold not in myself; whilst others depreciate what I say, and attribute to me sentiments which I never held. Both overstep the boundary of justice, and all injure the truth, the one party by too much hatred, the other by an overweening love."¹ S. Hilary, S. Ambrose, S. Basil, and S. Gregory Nazianzen, have all made honorable mention of Origen, though not justifying his real or imputed errors.

"All true Catholics," writes Vincentius Lirinensis, "should know that they ought to receive teachers with the Church, not desert the faith of the Church with their teachers."² And with this spirit we may safely glean all the great good to be derived from Origen, without binding ourselves blindly to support all that bears his name. We are Catholics, not Origenists. Let us strive to imitate his many virtues, and his unfailing desire in all things to serve his and our Master, in humble hope that when the day of judgment comes, and those "that sleep

¹ In S. Luke xxv. quoted by Tillemont.

² Adv. Heres. xvii.

in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt," He Who judgeth not as man judgeth, may have mercy upon us, and upon all those who have heartily striven to do what they could, and serve Him faithfully, remembering the promise, that such as be "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."¹

¹ Dan. xii. 2, 3.

S. CYPRIAN.

ARCHBISHOP AND MARTYR.

“ But who is this upon the pictured pane,
 With stole deep-dyed in blood,
No countenance amid that saintly train
 Of sterner fortitude ?
Cyprian, Saint, Bishop, Martyr ! forth he stands,
 In the rich glow of Afric’s burning sky,—
To us of other tongues and other lands,
 In our own native eloquence brought nigh.
To thee, another Carthage, he comes near,
 Tyre of the Western wave, in warning brought !
Thence may’st thou learn a sterner faith and fear,
For hues of heaven Time cannot bring to nought,
Still fresh the martyr’s blood flows in each glowing thought.”

LIFE OF S. CYPRIAN.

CHAPTER I.

“ Who is God’s chosen Priest ?

* * * He

Who hath learn’d lowliness

From his LORD’s cradle, patience from His Cross ;

Whom poor men’s eyes and hearts consent to bless ;

To whom, for CHRIST, the world is loss.

Who both in agony

Hath seen Him and in glory : and in both

Own’d Him Divine, and yielded nothing loth

Body and soul, to live and die,

In witness of his LORD,

In humble following of his SAVIOUR dear.”

Christian Year.

S. CYPRIAN’S BIRTH.—LIFE BEFORE HIS BAPTISM.—HIS
CONVERSION.—HIS BAPTISM.—IS ORDAINED PRIEST.—
AND ELECTED BISHOP.—HIS EPISCOPAL DUTIES.—IS PRO-
SCRIBED.—LEAVES CARTHAGE.—CAUSE OF THE PERSE-
CUTION.—S. CYPRIAN’S CARES FOR HIS DIOCESE.—IN-
TERNAL DISSENSIONS AT CARTHAGE.

Few fitter titles could be found for the glorious
saint and martyr Cyprian, than that bestowed upon
him by the heathen sentence which condemned

him to die—"The Standard bearer of the Christians." His career was a short one, and during it the battle was fierce and appalling, but he stood firm and unshrinking, never for one moment faltering under the ceaseless attacks made upon his great banner both by open foes, and worse, by false friends. And even when at last he fell, warrior like, he still clasped the Standard, and in death sustained that which he had fought and died for. "Perchance even to the end of the world, he will speak on."¹ It would indeed be presumptuous to seek to frame an eulogium of one, whom S. Augustine has pronounced himself unable worthily to praise, that "Catholic Bishop and martyr, who the greater he was, so much the more humbled himself in all things that he might find grace before God," who "taught in life what he did, and did in death what he taught." His own fervid eloquence would have been insufficient to speak his praise, it has been said,² but his actions are sufficient to set it forth, and to lead us to reverence his memory and thank God for giving to His Church militant so great a warrior, to all succeeding ages so great an example.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprian was a native of Carthage, the precise year of his birth is not known, neither the names of his parents. They were how-

¹ Pont. D. Vita S. Cyp. ² Tillemont; Vie de S. Cyp. i.

ever heathens, and Cyprian himself was educated in pagan darkness. His powerful intellect being devoted to profane study, he became a great proficient in all the various branches of philosophy and science, so much that he taught rhetoric in his native city with eminent success. At this time the world had many fascinations for Cyprian, he was wealthy and his manner of life was luxurious and splendid, the estimation in which he was held by the public so great, that whenever he went abroad, he was followed by a train of clients and admirers. Thus passed a considerable portion of his life, during which however, all within was not so fair and unruffled as the external appearance implied. S. Cyprian thus speaks concerning it: "While I lay in darkness and bewildering night, and was tossed to and fro on the billows of this troublesome world, ignorant of my true life, an outcast from light and truth, I used to think that second birth which Divine mercy promised for my salvation, a hard saying according to the life I then led; as if a man could be so quickened to a new life in the laver of healing water, as to put off his natural self, and keep his former tabernacle, yet be changed in heart and soul! How is it possible, said I, for so great a conversion to be accomplished, so that both the obstinate defilement of our natural substance, and old and ingrained habits, should suddenly and

rapidly be put off; evils, whose roots are deeply seated within? When does he learn frugality, to whom fine feasts and rich banquets have become a habit? or he who in gay sumptuous robes glisters in gold and purple; when does he reduce himself to ordinary and simple raiment? Another whose bent is among public distinctions and honors, cannot bear to become a private and unnoticed man; while one who is thronged by a phalanx of dependents, and retinued by the overflowing attendance of an obsequious host, thinks it punishment to be alone. The temptation still unrelaxed, need is it, that as before, wine should entice, pride inflate, anger inflame, covetousness disquiet, cruelty stimulate, ambition delight, and lust lead headlong. Such were my frequent musings, for whereas I was encumbered with the sins of my past life, which it seemed impossible to be rid of, so I had used myself to give way to my clinging infirmities, and from despair of better things to humour the evils of my heart, as slaves born in my house, and my proper offspring.”¹ But an Allwise FATHER was watching over the struggles of one fore-elected as a “chosen vessel,”—the Spirit of GOD moved upon the dark and troubled waters of his heart, and light beamed upon him. The immediate earthly agent in this blessed change was Cæcilius, an aged Carthaginian

¹ Ad Donat. 2, 3.

priest, who had himself been converted by Minutius Felix and his companion Octavius.¹ Cyprian was warmly attached to this "just and memorable man,"² whom he loved to the end of his life as the friend and brother of his soul, and still more, as the father of his spiritual life.

S. Cyprian became forthwith a catechumen, unhesitatingly adopting a rigid rule of self-denial and restraint, and not only receiving, but incorporating into his own heart with such intensity the precepts of the Gospel, that without a regret he sold his large possessions to give to the poor, heartily and sincerely taking up CHRIST'S Cross and following Him. "He despised this world's riches," says S. Gregory Nazianzen, "he abandoned all the pomps and vanities of his age, and subjected his body to severe mortification. Purity triumphed over all his former tastes, he wore the simple garb of a philosopher. With his gravity he so joined gentleness and kindness that pride was far from him, and his vast erudition and learning he applied to the service of the Church."³

¹ When convinced by argument of the truth of Christianity, Cæcilius exclaimed, "I congratulate both you and myself as conquerors! Ye have triumphed over me, I have triumphed over error. But the chief victory and gain are mine, who by being conquered, find the crown of truth."

² Pont. Vit. v. ³ Quoted by Tillemont, tome iv. p. 50.

In all holy things, Cyprian advanced not as a babe in CHRIST, but as a strong man ; and (probably) in the year 246, he received the sacrament of Baptism. To use his own words :—" After that life-giving water succoured me, washing away the stain of former years, and pouring into my cleansed and hallowed breast the Light which comes from heaven,—after that I drank in the heavenly Spirit, and was created a new man by a second birth ; then marvellously what before was doubtful became plain to me, what was hidden was revealed, what was dark began to shine, what was before difficult now had a way and means, what had seemed impossible now could be achieved, what was in me of the guilty flesh now confessed that it was earthy, what was quickened in me by the HOLY GHOST now had a growth according to God. . . . From God is all we can be ; from Him we live, and from Him we grow ; and by that strength which is from Him accepted and ingathered, we learn beforehand, even in this present state, the foretokens of what is yet to be. Let only fear be a guard upon innocence, that that LORD, Who, by the influence of His heavenly Mercy, has graciously shone into our hearts, may be detained by righteous obedience in the hostelry of a mind that pleases Him, that the security imparted to us may not beget slothfulness, nor the former enemy steal upon us anew. But if

you would keep the path of innocency and of righteousness, and walk with a firm, unfailing step, hanging upon God in all your strength, and with all your heart, you have but to be that which this beginning has made you ; your power to do will be according to the increase of spiritual grace. For there is no measure or rule, as is the way of earthly gifts, in dispensing of the gifts from heaven ; the Spirit is poured forth liberally, not confined by limits, not hindered in its course by the restraint of barriers, or by definitely measured goal. It flows on without stop ; it flows over without stint. We have only to present to it a thirsting and opened breast ; what measure we bring thither of faith to hold, so much do we drink in of grace to inundate. . . . Thus, in so far as we are what we have begun to be, the Spirit which we have received enjoys its state of freedom ; in so far as we have not changed body and limbs, our fleshly sight is still darkened by the cloud of this world.”¹

That the baptized and regenerate Christian must diligently guard the pure treasure of his cleansing, S. Cyprian ceases not to press upon all men :—“ We, who have been sanctified in Baptism, ask and request that we may persevere such as we have begun. For this we daily make petition, since we need a daily sanctification ; in order that we, who sin day

¹ Ad Donat. 3, 4.

by day, may cleanse afresh our offences by a continual sanctification. . . . We are sanctified in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and by the Spirit of our GOD. We pray that this sanctification may remain in us ; and as our LORD and Judge warns the man, to whom He had given healing and fresh life, to sin no more, lest a worse thing should come upon him, we make petition with continual prayers. By day and night we make our request that the sanctification and renewed life, which is obtained from GOD's Grace, may be preserved by His Protection."¹ "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst, for ye shall be filled." S. Cyprian indeed offered that "thirsting and opened breast" of which he speaks, and he was richly filled with the good things of GOD.

Very soon after his baptism, at a much earlier period than was customary, S. Cyprian was ordained to the Priesthood ; and in the year 248, only two years after his baptism, he was chosen by the general desire, both of Clergy and laity, to succeed Donatus as Bishop of Carthage. But whilst all (with the exception of a few factious and schismatically inclined persons) united in judging S. Cyprian to be fit, above all others, for that important office, he alone held himself to be unworthy of it, and withdrew from the destined honor, wishing

¹ De Orat. Dom. vii.

that an older man should be selected.¹ The people, however, surrounded his house, calling loudly for him, and waiting anxiously for his appearance; and when at last he came forth, receiving him with an "excess of joy." "How henceforth he bore himself, who would suffice to relate?" says his deacon and companion, Pontius. "How great was his loving-kindness, his strength of mind, his mercy, his severity! Such sanctity and grace shone forth from his countenance, as to confuse the gazer. His look was grave and glad; neither a sternness which was sad, nor overmuch good-nature, but a just mixture of both; so that one might doubt whether he claimed more our reverence or our love, except that he claimed both. Nor did his dress belie his countenance, subdued as it was to the middle course. He was not the man to be inflated with the pride of the world's fashions, yet neither to grovel in a studious penury; in that the latter style of dress is as boastful, as that so ambitious frugality is ostentatious. How, when a Bishop, he acted towards the poor, whom he already loved as a catechumen, let the priests of mercifulness consider. . . . As for Cyprian, what he was, such his Bishop's

¹ Pont. Vit. 6. Probably older in the Priesthood, as S. Cyprian must at that time have been of a fit age for the episcopate.

seat found him ready made, and did not make him.”

It has been a subject of astonishment to all, how deeply and accurately he was already imbued with the whole of Christian doctrine and discipline; but doubtless his wisdom came from GOD, Who had so highly favored him, and he could do all things in CHRIST, Which strengthened him. The Bishop of Carthage had the spiritual guard of a very large province, extending over the greater part of Christian Africa; and no small share of labour and care fell upon that Primate. How admirably he conducted all these labours and cares, the whole history of his episcopal life shows. His own words concerning discipline give a fair representation of his firm yet tender rule.

“Discipline, the safeguard of hope, the stay of faith, our guide in the way of salvation, the stimulant and nutriment of inward goodness, the teacher of virtue, makes us to abide in CHRIST always, and live to GOD continually, and to come to the promises of heaven, and the divine rewards. It tends to salvation to follow her, to death to turn away and neglect her. . . . The HOLY GHOST speaks in the Psalms, Unto the ungodly said GOD, why dost thou preach My laws and takest My covenant in thy mouth, whereas thou hatest dis-

¹ Pont. Vit. 7.

cipline and hast cast My words behind thee?
 And again, My son, despise not the discipline of the LORD, and faint not when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the LORD loveth He rebuketh.¹
 If then GOD rebukes whom He loves, and the end of His rebuke is amendment, then it is from love and not from hatred, that the clergy rebuke whom they would amend, GOD having afore told and signified our times by the word of Jeremiah; And I will give you pastors according to My Heart, which shall feed you with the food of discipline."²

During two years S. Cyprian was permitted to give up all his thoughts and energies to the important duties intrusted to him by GOD, undisturbed from without; but soon the Decian persecution broke out, and speedily the cry arose of "Cyprian to the lions!" Shortly "Cæcilius Cyprianus, Bishop of the Christians," was proscribed,³ and all men were forbidden to conceal either his person or his property.⁴ We can imagine that S. Cyprian's natural impulse would have been to stay and meet the hour of danger, but GOD vouchsafed in a vision especially to command him to retire,⁵ and he ac-

¹ Ps. l. 17, and Prov. iii. 11. S. Cyprian quotes several other similar texts.

² De Discip. i.

³ Epist. lix. 7.

⁴ Epist. lxvi. 3.

⁵ Epist. xvi. 3.—The visions repeatedly granted to S. Cyprian form a very remarkable part of his history, and alone might

cordingly fled, "from fear, but right fear; fear of offending the LORD, fear which had rather be dutiful to God's precepts, than be crowned together with the breach of them. A mind surrendered in all things to God, and a faith enslaved to the Divine direction, considered that it would be sinning in very suffering, unless it had obeyed the LORD Who then ordered that retreat."¹

Great and grievous indeed would have been the loss to the Church, had this her most dutiful son been taken from her, when she required more than ever one who "when wounds had been received, and darts cast by the changeful art of the torturing enemy, had heavenly remedies at hand according to the nature of each, now to pierce and now to soothe; whose mind was divinely tempered, to steer the Church in a steady middle course between the rebounding waves of contending schisms."²

suffice to do away with any marvel at his deep and full understanding in all spiritual matters. Beside the more prominent visions concerning the persecution, and his own martyrdom, there were others instructing him on minor points, calling him to more earnest vigils and prayers, warning him of the acceptableness of alms and penitence before God, and other similar matters. Surely we must feel in speaking of one so highly favored, that we are treading upon "holy ground."

¹ Pont. Vit. 9.

² Ib.

Had S. Cyprian then been crowned with martyrdom, who would there have been, asks his deacon Pontius, to curb the wandering, to restore the lapsed, to guide the penitent, to teach the ignorant and schismatic, to comfort the sorrowful, and to cheer and incite the martyrs? "Well surely was it ordered then, well and divinely, that a man so necessary for so many and so good objects, was retarded from a martyr's consummation."¹

Some time before the commencement of the persecution, its approach had been made known to S. Cyprian in a vision, most beautifully narrated in one of his own letters.² GOD the FATHER was represented as the father of a family, at Whose right hand sat the SON, sorrowing that His people would not obey Him, and that therefore it was permitted to one who stood on the other side to go amongst them with a net to destroy them, at which he, their enemy, rejoiced greatly. S. Cyprian accordingly regarded the persecution as a chastisement for the laxity and corruption which had crept in amongst the Christians. In writing to his priests and deacons, he says, "To appease and obtain mercy of the LORD, we should mourn not in words only, but with fasting and tears, and all other methods of intreaty. For we must know and confess, that the pressure of this so dreadful

¹ Pont. Vit. 8.

² Epist. xi. 4.

devastation, which has wasted the largest portion of our flock, and still is wasting them, has come upon us for our sins, in not keeping the way of the LORD, nor observing the heavenly commandments given us to our salvation. Our LORD fulfilled the will of the FATHER, and we do not fulfil the will of our LORD; eager about our property or our gains, seeking to exalt ourselves, giving ourselves up to emulation and dissension; careless about single mindedness and the faith, renouncing the world in words only, not in deeds; each of us pleasing himself.”¹ And elsewhere he also says, “It has pleased the LORD to prove His family, as long repose had corrupted the discipline which had come down to us from Him. . . . The Priests were wanting in religious devotedness, the ministers in entireness of faith; there was no mercy in works, no discipline in manners. Men wore their beards disfigured, and women distained their complexions with a dye. The eyes were changed from what God made them, and a lying colour was passed upon the hair. The hearts of the simple were misled by treacherous artifices, and brethren became entangled in seductive snares; ties of marriage were formed with unbelievers; members of CHRIST abandoned to the heathen. Not only rash swearing, but even false; persons in high places

¹ Epist. xi. 1.

were swollen with contemptuousness, poisoned reproaches fell from their mouths, and men were sundered by unabating quarrels. Numerous Bishops, who ought to be an encouragement and example to others, despising their sacred calling, engaged themselves in secular vocations, relinquished their chair, deserted their people, strayed among foreign provinces, hunted the markets for mercantile profits, tried to amass large sums of money, while they had brethren starving within the Church, took possession of estates by fraudulent proceedings, and multiplied their gains by accumulated usuries.”¹

The exact spot of S. Cyprian’s retirement is unknown to us, but from it he watched over the welfare of his beloved flock with unceasing vigilance and indefatigable industry, devoting whatever he yet possessed of money to their benefit. Thus, in one letter (probably the first written from his banishment) he says: “As to what concerns the supply of necessities, either of those who having confessed the LORD with a glorious voice, have been cast into prison, or of those who labour under poverty and indigence, and still abide in the LORD, I intreat that nothing be wanting, since the whole sum that was brought together was distributed amongst the Clergy for such emergencies, that so

¹ De Laps. 4.

several might have wherewithal to relieve the necessities and the pressure of individuals.”¹

In another letter he says: “I have written most fully to our Clergy, that whatever may be required for your food or clothing be provided, and I myself also have sent you two hundred and fifty pieces out of the slender sum I had with me for my expenses, other two hundred and fifty I had sent a little before.”² His numerous letters to the Clergy and laity attest the anxiety S. Cyprian felt as far as possible to remedy the evil of his absence; the former he intreats to “let their diligence take the place of his duty.”³ Earnestly as S. Cyprian longed to return to Carthage, he resisted the desire, for it was generally agreed, that the presence of the Chief Shepherd would only attract greater and more fatal attention to his flock.⁴ How oppressive the weight upon him was during this retirement, it is hard to conceive. Even those who ought most to have supported him, were at the best but lukewarm friends. Fabian, Bishop of Rome,⁵ had been martyred, and during the time

¹ Epist. vi. 1.—See also xiv. 2.

² Epist. xiii. 5.

³ Epist. xii. 1.

⁴ Even Gibbon says: “He possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, or provoke the suspicions and resentment of the Pagan magistrates.”—i. 16.

⁵ As the conclusion of Fabian’s episcopal career was saint-like and blessed, so was its beginning. He was staying at

that the See remained vacant, the Roman Clergy wrote to the Priests and Deacons of Carthage, insinuating some blame of their Bishop, in consequence of which S. Cyprian addressed to them a mild letter in reply. In Carthage, too, a faction existed, headed by Felicissimus, one of those who had opposed the election of S. Cyprian, and who now was schismatically exciting confusion and perplexity within the Church, by receiving and re-admitting those who had denied their LORD, into the Church's Communion, without the atonement of penitence, and the cleansing of absolution, provided by the Church as the healthy means of restoration. From this internal source sprang one of the greatest troubles of S. Cyprian's rule, and the one which in the most signal manner called forth all his firm, faithful, and truly Catholic discipline, blended with the most tender and affectionate mercy to and gentleness for those with whom he was constrained to deal as it might seem harshly.

Rome at the time of the death of Anteros, Bishop of that Church, and being present at the assembly gathered together to elect a successor, Fabian was unanimously chosen, and a dove lighting down upon him, all the assembly cried out aloud that he was appointed of God, and immediately he was installed in the Episcopal chair.—Euseb. vi. 29.

CHAPTER II.

“ Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.”

CHAUCER.

THE LAPSED.—MARTYRS' CERTIFICATES.—S. CYPRIAN'S LETTER TO THE CONFESSORS.—HIS CARE AND ANXIETY FOR THE LAPSED.—THE ROMAN CLERGY WRITE TO HIM CONCERNING THEM.—PROVISION FOR THE LAPSED IN CASE OF MORTAL SICKNESS.—PROGRESS OF THE PERSECUTION.—SUFFERINGS OF THE MARTYRS.—S. CYPRIAN ENCOURAGES THEM.—HE HAS A VISION OF THE END OF THE PERSECUTION.—RETURNS TO CARTHAGE.—HIS DEALINGS WITH THE LAPSED.—THE GUILT OF SOME OF THEM MADE KNOWN BY GOD.—THE LIBELLATICI.—NOVATUS.—NOVATIAN.—CORNELIUS, BISHOP OF ROME.—SCHISMATICAL ELECTION OF NOVATIAN.—COUNCILS OF ROME AND CARTHAGE.—S. CYPRIAN ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.—FRESH PERSECUTIONS.—MARTYRDOM OF CORNELIUS.—GREAT PESTILENCE.—MEASURES TAKEN BY S. CYPRIAN.

THE Decian persecution had not been attended with results in general so glorious to the Christian cause, as was the case with those previously endured. The laxity which had crept into the Church, over which S. Cyprian laments so sadly, was but an ill preparation for times of trial, and many were

unable to meet the horrors and dangers of persecution. Not the laity only, but even amongst the Clergy some fell away, as we learn from the saint himself, who writes thus: "I had wished, dearest brethren, that my epistles should greet all my Clergy steadfast and in safety. But since this adverse storm, which overthrew the greater portion of my people, hath added this accumulation also to my sorrows, that its desolating sway has reached a portion of the Clergy too, I pray the LORD that you at least, who, I learn, stand fast both in faith and courage, I may, by the Divine mercy, henceforward greet in safety also."¹ These "lapsed," sought to be re-admitted to the Church's communion without undergoing a due course of penitence, which for their own sakes, as well as for the general welfare of the Church, S. Cyprian felt himself called on strenuously to resist; not the less when the practice began to prevail of obtaining from the martyrs or confessors letters asserting the repentance of the lapsed, and requiring their re-admission to the privileges of the faithful. "Let such an one, with his friends, be admitted to communion,"² was the form of these letters, a wide and unsatisfactory method of doing away with all distinction between the real sincere penitent, and the unsteady and presumptuous, who would probably have now

¹ Epist. xiv. 1.² Epist. xv. 3.

no more fixedness in the faith than they had before, and when trial again offered itself, would again fall away. On this subject S. Cyprian writes frequently. To the martyrs and confessors, his "very dear brethren," he says, "The anxiety of my station, and the fear of the LORD, oblige me, most valiant and blessed martyrs, to admonish you by my epistles, that they, by whom faith in the LORD is so devotedly and valiantly maintained, ought moreover to maintain the law and discipline of the LORD. For as it behoves all the soldiers of CHRIST to guard the injunctions of their Commander, so it is more in keeping, that ye should more diligently obey His precepts, in that ye have been made an example to the rest, both of constancy, and of the fear of God. But now with the utmost pain of mind, I learn that these things are undone by certain Presbyters, who consider neither the fear of God nor the honor of the Bishop. For whereas you sent letters to me, wherein you desired that your requests might be examined, and peace granted to certain lapsed, at such time as, the persecution having ended, we should have begun to meet with our Clergy, and to be re-assembled; they, contrary to the law of the Gospel, contrary also to your respectful petition, before penance undergone, before confession made of their most grievous and extreme sin, before imposition

of hands by the Bishop and Clergy, in token of their repentance, dare to make oblations for them, and to give them the Eucharist, that is to profane the sacred Body of the LORD ; though it is written, ' Whoever shall eat the Bread and drink the Cup of the LORD unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of CHRIST.' The lapsed indeed may be excused in this. For who that is dead in sin would not hasten to obtain life ? Who would not hurry to arrive at his own salvation ? But it belongs to those set over them to observe the commandment, and to instruct their haste and their ignorance, lest they who should be shepherds of the sheep become their slayers. For to concede these things, which turn to destruction, is to deceive. Nor so is the fallen raised, but rather by the offence against God is thrust headlong into ruin. And whereas, I hear, most dear and valiant brethren, that you are importuned by the shamelessness of some, I intreat you with all possible earnestness that mindful of the Gospel, . . . you would anxiously and cautiously weigh the requests of your petitioners ; since as friends of the LORD, and hereafter to judge with Him, ye must look into the behaviour, and works, and deserts of every one : ye must also examine the kind and quality of their several sins, lest if any thing should have been hastily and unworthily either promised

by you, or confirmed by us, our Church should have occasion to blush before the Gentiles.”¹

There is a most apostolic spirit displayed throughout S. Cyprian’s treatment of these offenders ; his sole aim being to further God’s Glory, and the salvation of souls, without any regard to himself or his personal dignity :² and he ever seems ready to take the most charitable and compassionate view of the offenders themselves. Thus, after again quoting the words, “ Whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily,” he goes on to say, “ He that conceals this from our brethren, deceives them ; unhappy that whereas, by undergoing due penance, they might, by their prayers and good works, appease God as a FATHER and Merciful, they are seduced to perish more utterly. . . . They, however, are not so guilty, who are less acquainted with the law of Scripture ; but they will be guilty who, being in authority, do not suggest these things,” &c.³ Again, “ How ye lament and grieve over the fall of our brethren, I know from myself, dearest brethren, who also lament and grieve with you for each of them, and suffer and feel what the blessed Apostle said, Who is weak, and I burn not ? and, Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. I too suffer and grieve for our brethren, who, having lapsed and fallen pros-

¹ Epist. xv. 1, 2.

² Epist. xvi.

³ Epist. xvi. 2.

trate under the violence of the persecution, have torn away part of our bowels with them, and inflicted equal pain on us through their wounds. . . . Let no one gather prematurely a bitter fruit. Let no one, before he have carefully repaired it, again entrust to the deep his ship, shattered and broken by the waves. Let no one hasten to recover, and clothe himself in a tattered garment, until he have seen it mended by a skilful workman, and have received it dressed from the hands of the fuller.”¹ “The rest of the people that have lapsed do you cherish by your presence; and that they abandon not the faith and the LORD’s Mercy, do you cheer them by your consolation: for neither, if meek and humble, and truly doing penance, they shall continue in good works, will they be left without the help and aid of the LORD; so that they too shall not be holpen by Divine Grace. To the catechumens, also, should any be overtaken by sudden danger, and be near their end, let not your vigilance be wanting; nor let the mercy of the LORD be denied to them that implore the Divine Grace.”²

Whilst S. Cyprian was wishing to arrest the hasty and injudicious pardon thus granted to those who had fallen, until such time as due investigation could be made into their respective cases, and their treatment adapted accordingly, his opi-

¹ Epist. xvii.

² Epist. xviii.

nions and wishes were seconded by the Church of Rome. Her Clergy express this as follows:—
“ Let us cherish, guard, strengthen one another by our mutual prayers. Let us pray for the lapsed, that they may be raised up. Let us pray also for those that stand, that they may not be tempted so as to fall. Let us pray that those who are reported to have fallen, acknowledging the heinousness of their sin, may learn not to desire an instantaneous and too hasty cure. Let us pray that the fruit of pardon may follow in the penitence of the lapsed, that being conscious of their crime, they may cheerfully lend us their patience for awhile, nor disturb yet more the still shaken condition of the Church ; lest they be found to have lighted up persecution within the Church, and turbulence also be added to their many crimes. For shamefacedness especially becomes those who lie condemned, as unashamed to sin. Let them indeed knock at the doors, but by no means break them open. Let them come to the threshold of the Church, but by no means leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp, but armed with modesty, whereby they may know that they have been deserters. Let them resume the trumpet of their prayers, but not to sound a charge to battle. . . . Much will they be profited by modest petitions, bashful entreaty, needful humility, patience not

inactive. Let them send forth tears as ambassadors for their sorrows; let groans uttered from their inmost breast plead their cause, showing their sorrow and shame for the crime committed.”¹

So, again, some of the African priests and confessors: “Cleansed by good works, must be the hands polluted with impious sacrifices; the wretched lips, defiled with unholy food, must be purified with the words of true penitence. The mind must be broken up, renewed, and consecrated in the inmost recesses of the faithful heart. Frequent penitential groanings must be heard. Not once alone, but oftentimes, must tears of faithfulness be poured from their eyes; that those very eyes, which have with guilt looked upon the idols, may by tears, appeasing God, wash out the crimes they had committed. In disease, nothing is so necessary as patience; the distempered struggle with their pain, and at length hope for health, if by endurance they can overcome their pain. For treacherous is the scar which the physician has too hastily healed over; and the cure is undone by any casualty, if the remedies be not applied securely, because slowly. A flame is easily rekindled into a conflagration, unless the whole fire be extinguished to the very last spark. In like way, such as these should know that their case is better pro-

¹ Epist. xxx. 11.

vided for by the very delay, and that remedies are more sure from needful caution.”¹

There was one case, however, for which the holy and tender Pastor made special provision ; and that was for such of the members of the flock as, owing to their fall, were kept out of the Church’s communion, who should be laid on the bed of death, and for whom no longer term of penitence could be anticipated. “Such,” he says, “departing this life, and having confessed and received imposition of hands to repentance, should be remitted to the LORD with the peace promised them by the martyrs.”² And again,—“Since I see that there is yet no opening for my coming to you, and summer has already begun,—a season troubled with continual and severe sicknesses,—I think that the cases of our brethren should be met ; so that they who have received letters from the martyrs, and may be helped by their privilege with God, if they are seized with any ailment or danger of sickness, may, without waiting for my presence, make confession of their sin before any Presbyter at hand,—or, if a Presbyter shall not be found, and death approaches, then even before a Deacon ; that so receiving imposition of hands unto repentance, they may go to the LORD with that peace which the martyrs in their letters have requested for them.”³ To this

¹ Epist. xxxi. 8. ² Epist. xx. 2. ³ Epist. xviii.

merciful and charitable injunction the Roman Church also cordially assents :—" We then here . . . yet have thought . . . that those who can bear delay should be kept in suspense ; but that to those whose life, hastening to its close, admits of no delay, when they have done penance, and often professed a detestation for their deeds ; if with tears, with groaning, with weeping, they have given signs of unfeigned sorrow and penitence, when in man's sight no hope of life is left, that so at length, with caution and solicitude, relief be granted to them, God Himself only knowing what He will do with such, and in what way He will adjust the balance of His judgment ; ourselves, however, taking anxious heed, that neither should wicked men commend our too ready compliance, nor the truly penitent blame our severity as cruel."¹

Meanwhile the persecution raged fearfully, and the tortures inflicted on those professing the Name of CHRIST were such as might well confound those who had not counted the cost before they entered the battle. Horrid prisons, where irons and chains galled their limbs, and hunger and thirst wasted their strength,² were only exchanged for protracted agonies on the rack, the crushing stocks, the fire, the scourge, the sword, the pincers, and the spear, till "in God's servants, not limbs, but wounds,

¹ Epist. xxx. 11.² Epist. xxxix. 1.

were tortured.”¹ But if some yielded worn out with suffering, or shrunk back appalled at the overwhelming prospect before them many there were who endured stedfast to the end, whom “the tortures themselves the more incited to the conflict,” who were “animated with a glow of courage to wage the strife, as becometh soldiers of CHRIST in His holy camp,” whom no “threats could alarm, no anguish overcome, nor earthly punishment avail more to cast down, than Divine protection to lift up.” “The crowd of bystanders witnessed wondering the heavenly conflict, the conflict of God, the battle of CHRIST; that His servants stood with voice unfettered, with minds unbroken, with courage given of God, of secular weapons indeed naked, but armed and trustful in the armour of faith. The tortured stood more resolute than the torturers; and the racked and mangled limbs vanquished the grappling hooks that racked and mangled them. . . . O, what a spectacle was that to the LORD, how sublime, how great, how acceptable to the Eyes of God, the fealty and devotion of His soldiery! . . . How did CHRIST rejoice there, how gladly in such His servants did He both fight and conquer, the Guardian of their faith, and giving to believers so much as he who taketh of His Hand believeth that he receives.”²

¹ Epist. x.

² Epist. x. 1.

Amongst the Carthaginian martyrs, S. Cyprian speaks most of one Mappalicus, who having told the Pro-consul that he should see a worthy combat, fulfilled his promise, and died in the midst of tortures. The words of commendation and encouragement addressed to the imprisoned confessors by S. Cyprian must have gladdened their hearts and supported their noble courage, so that "having entered in the path of the LORD's favor they should go on in the strength of the Spirit to receive their crown, having the LORD their Protector and Guide, Who said, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."¹ To these martyrs and confessors, to the clergy and laity of Carthage, to the Roman clergy, and the confessors of that church, S. Cyprian wrote numerous and most edifying epistles, of which the latter in replying speak thus: "Your letters have shone in upon us as in a storm a serene air; in a troubled sea a longed for calm; rest amid toil; health in peril and in pain; in thickest darkness a bright and shining light; we so drank them in with thirsty spirits, and received them with famished longing, as with joy to find ourselves sufficiently fed and invigorated by them for the struggle with the enemy. The LORD will repay you for this your charity, and return you the fruit due to so good a work."²

¹ Epist. vi.² Epist. xxxi. 1.

But the time was at hand when the great blessing of his presence was to be restored to the flock for whom he ceaselessly prayed and laboured. Whilst as yet there was no prospect of an abatement in the storm of persecution, God granted to His favored servant a vision, in which it was said unto him that he should not be afraid, for that peace was at hand, though there were yet some to be proved.¹ A desperate conflict with the Goths before a little town in Mæsia destroyed the Roman army, and both Decius and his son remained among the slain; this event gave relief to the cruelly oppressed Christians. In one of his last letters to his people S. Cyprian had foretold that by Easter Day, he should be with them, nor was he disappointed. About that time, A.D. 251, the Bishop returned to Carthage, with the same one object in view, in all things to promote God's Glory, and the people's welfare.

Much, very much did he find to do, the guiding and restraining hand of the Chief Shepherd was greatly needed, but as usual, gentleness and forbearance were mingled with decision, and all were tempered by the vivid and intense longing after unity which was so marked a characteristic of S. Cyprian's whole life. His own words best describe the cessation of the persecution: "Peace we see

¹ Epist. xi. 7.

restored to the Church ; and while weak believers thought it not likely, and false ones impossible, by God's Help and defence our safety is re-established. Our minds are recovering their cheerfulness ; and after a season of trouble the cloud has dispersed, and the sunshine succeeds of tranquillity and calmness. We must yield praise to God, and celebrate His bounties and gifts with thanksgiving, though from giving thanks throughout the persecution our voice hath not desisted. The enemy can never so avail, but that we who love the LORD with all our heart and soul and strength, will at all times and in all places tell out the adoration of His blessedness and praise.

“ Day has arrived, the desire of all our thoughts ; and after a long night of dreadful and miserable darkness, light from the LORD issues forth, and gives its radiance upon the world. Confessors bright in the honors of an unsullied name, and glorious in the praise of virtue and faith, . . . soldiers of CHRIST are before us, a white robed army, . . . women also, who in fighting against this world have triumphed over their sex ; virgins appear glorious in warfare, and boys whose virtues mount higher than their years.”¹

After speaking of the joyful side of things, S. Cyprian goes on to speak of the lapsed in most

¹ De Laps. 1, 2.

touching words. "These heavenly crowns of martyrs, these great and eminent attainments of brethren who stand upright, are saddened by one cause of grief, which is, that the violence of the enemy has torn from us a portion of our own bowels, and cast it away in his devastating cruelty! How, dearest brethren, amid the changeful tide of feeling, with what words or what manner shall I speak to you? Tears, more than words, are wanted to express the pain with which we have to mourn this blow to our community, and lament the manifold losses of a once numerous society. For who has so hard or iron a heart, who is so lost to brotherly love, as amidst the manifold dismemberment among us, and standing amongst the melancholy and disfigured remnants, to refrain his eyes from weeping, and not rather in the outbreking of grief to express with tears before words, the sorrow that he feels within? I grieve, brethren, I grieve with you; my own truth, my individual stedfastness, offers no flattering beguilement of my pain; for no blow so reaches the shepherd as that which falls upon his flock. I join my breast to each; I partake the sad weight of sorrow and mourning; I lament with them that lament; I weep with them that weep; I fall myself prostrate amongst the fallen. Those darts of the foe who grappled us have pierced my limbs; through my body those

cruel swords have gone. Amid the blow of persecution my mind could not remain independent, and unaffected; in the fall of my brethren, I too have suffered downfall.”¹ Continuing to address his erring children, S. Cyprian draws a distinction between such as have fallen under the grievous pressure of torment, and those who shrunk back fearful of suffering, “He indeed, may complain of torments, who has suffered till he has been overcome by them; there is excuse in what he endures, if he has given way beneath it; he may then offer petition and say—‘I did indeed wish to fight boldly, I remembered my vow, and took up the weapons of devotion and faithfulness, but while I was contending in the struggle, my successive torments and protracted pains became too much for me. My mind continued stedfast, and my faith kept its courage; my spirit long wrestled, unswerving, with the torturing penalties. But when my most hard judge’s cruelty again freshened, and my body was tired and wearied out, and the scourges lashed me, clubs bruised me, the rack strained me, the iron claw dug into me, and the flame scorched me, the flesh fell short in the effort, the infirmity of my frame yielded, and my body, not my mind, gave way beneath the suffering.’ Such plea as this will find ready excuse; such an excuse will be

¹ De Laps. 3.

attended with pity. . . . But what wounds are there to be shown by those who have made surrender, . . . where faith did not fall in fighting, but faithlessness prevented the fight? A wrong act, when there has been a free will in committing it, can have no excuse in compulsion. I speak not thus, in order to put burthen in their present circumstance upon the brethren, but as one who would urge them to make their peace the more by prayer. For since it is written, 'They who call you happy cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths,' he who soothes the sinner by a flattering gentleness, supplies the seed of future sinning, and does not stifle, but feeds transgression. . . . 'As many as I love,' saith the LORD, 'I rebuke and chasten.' In the same way should God's priest not mislead by treacherous compliances, but use the remedies that will end in health. It is an ill instructed physician that puts a sparing hand to the swollen edges of wounds, and collects the virus deep within the body, by not expelling it. The wound must be opened and pierced, and the more powerful restoratives be applied of cutting away the ulceration. He may call, and he may shriek, and complain of us, the sick man impatient through his pain; but he will be thankful afterwards, when he feels that he is cured."¹

¹ De Laps. 10, 11.

Of the false peace which some were offering to these spiritually diseased, S. Cyprian goes on to say, "It is not peace, but war. Why, when men ought to be weeping continually and making entreaty to their LORD, do they interrupt the sorrowing of their repentance, and pretend to receive them into communion? Their mercies are like the mercies of hail to the corn, the storm star¹ to the trees, a wasting pestilence to the flocks, and a fierce tempest to the ships. They rob them of the comfort of the eternal hope, they overthrow the tree from its roots, they help on a deadly contagion through baneful words, and dash the vessel upon the rocks, so that it gain not the harbour. Facility like this does not give peace, but takes it away; instead of conferring communion, it is an impediment to salvation."²

The greatest saints have ever been the most tender and compassionate in their dealings with penitents, even when a merciful severity was called for; and strongly as S. Cyprian presses the sense of his guilt upon the erring one who has denied his God, nothing can be more fervent than the earnestness with which he points out the only safe path to restore him to the blessedness that once he knew. "The LORD only can have mercy," he says, "He Alone can grant a pardon for sins which against

¹ The Comet?

² De Laps. 11.

Himself have been committed, Who bare our sins, Who grieved for us, Whom God delivered for our offences. . . . To the LORD we must pray, the LORD we must appease by making amends, to Him Who saith that if we deny Him, He will deny us, and Who Alone hath received all judgment from the FATHER.”¹ Owning Him, Who Alone can pardon, remission of sins must be sought according to His Divine appointment through the channel of His Church, to whom He has given power to bind and to loose. “Let each confess his sin, while his confession can be accepted, while the satisfaction and remission wrought by the priests are pleasing before the LORD. Let us turn to the LORD with the whole heart, and call down the mercy of God, by expressing repentance for our offences by genuine grief, before Him let the soul be laid prostrate, with Him let our sadness gain peace, on Him be all our hopes leant. To the LORD let us return with all our hearts. Let us appease His wrath and displeasure, with fastings, with weeping, with mournings, as Himself teaches. . . . Make confession of sin, purge the conscience by the hand of the priest. . . . In penitence and sorrow gain knowledge of your sins, recognize the deep charge upon your conscience, open the eyes of the heart to an intelligence of your offence, not despairing of

¹ De Laps. 12.

the LORD's mercy, yet neither making claim at once for His pardon. GOD, as with the affection of a Father, He is ever indulgent and kind ; so with the Majesty of a Judge is He dreadful ; as we have sinned greatly, let us weep greatly. For a deep wound diligent and long tending must not be wanting ; the repentance must not fall short of the offence. . . . Men must pray and intreat with increased continuance, pass the day in mourning, spend nights in vigils and weeping, employ their whole time in tears and lamentations, lie stretched on the ground, prostrate themselves amongst ashes, sackcloth, and dust ; after CHRIST's raiment lost, wish for no garment beside ; after the devil's feast, of choice fast, give themselves to righteous works whereby sins are cleansed, apply themselves to frequent almsgiving, whereby souls are freed from death."¹ Let us not think that in time of persecution only men can deny CHRIST, and need to apply to themselves S. Cyprian's solemn words of warning and exhortation, but let us each inquire closely of our own hearts whether we have in no way partaken of the sin he deprecates, (and with our privileges and comparative freedom from temptation how tenfold the guilt!) and if the answer be, 'LORD, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee,' let us be also found treading in the steps

¹ De Laps. 19, 11, 21.

of that penitence pointed out, and let 'every thought be called forth toward the healing of our wound,' so that judgment may be merged in mercy."¹

The matter of the Lapsi and Libellatici for some time occupied the attention of the Church. Some facts are narrated concerning the former by S. Cyprian, of a remarkable nature. One man who had voluntarily gone to the capitol to deny CHRIST, became suddenly dumb. A woman who had committed the same offence, with her own teeth bit out the offending tongue and died shortly afterwards. Another woman, who without the enjoined discipline of purification presented herself at the Altar, was seized with trembling agony, and sunk,

¹ Not those only who had committed the actual sin, but such as had at all entertained or harboured any thought thereof, were considered by S. Cyprian as needing the ministry of reconciliation. "How much better," he says, "is their faith, and more wise their fear, who with no crime fastened on them of sacrifice, or of accepting a certificate, yet because they have only had thought thereof, sorrowingly and honestly own thus much before the priests of God, yield up the confession of their conscience, put from them the load of the soul, and seek out a wholesome medicine even for light and little wounds; knowing that it is written, God is not mocked. Mocked and deceived God cannot be, nor sported with by artifice of cunning: he only sins the worse, who judging of God by man, thinks that he escapes the penalty of sin, because his sin was not openly committed."—De Laps. 18.

self-accused to the ground; whilst a man under the same circumstances, found that he held in his hands, not the consecrated bread, but a cinder. Another incident S. Cyprian relates as having occurred in his presence. An infant, the child of Christian parents, had been left behind in the confusion and terror of flight, and by its nurse was committed to the heathen magistrates. Being too young to eat of the sacrifices, they gave it some bread steeped in wine offered to their false Gods. After a while the child was restored to its parents, and by them was brought into the congregation, where, during the service it wept and sobbed bitterly. When however according to the primitive custom of the Church, the officiating deacon would have given some consecrated wine to the little one, it "turned its face away, under the instinct of God's Majesty," and would not receive it, thus making known how its innocence had been sullied. The Libellatici were those who had purchased from the heathen magistrates Libels or billets, as certificates that they had done sacrifice, thinking in this way to avoid the guilt of really sacrificing, and yet to save themselves from the consequences of resistance. S. Cyprian called together a synod of Bishops to decide on the line of treatment to be adopted towards these persons, and it was decided that according to the measure of their guilt a period of

penance should be assigned to them, before they were re-admitted to the Church's communion. The Libellatici were to undergo a shorter term of penance than the Lapsi, but in case of approaching death, the rule was to be relaxed for either class.¹

A new source of trouble had arisen in the Church, which called for all the judgment and forbearance of her rulers. This took its origin from Novatus, a Priest of Carthage, probably one of those who had opposed the election of S. Cyprian to that see. His character was at all times that of a bold and factious profligate; "one ever eager for innovation, frantic with the rapacity of an insatiable avarice, puffed up with the arrogance of swelling pride, always known for evil to the Bishops here; ever as a heretic and perfidious, condemned by the voice of the whole Priesthood; . . . a flatterer that he may deceive; . . . a torch and firebrand to light up the flames of sedition; a whirlwind and tempest to make shipwrecks of faith; a foe to quiet . . . an enemy to peace."² And from S. Pacian we

¹ To this time is attributed the institution of the Presbyter Penitentiary, whose special office it was to receive the confessions of those who had fallen into post-baptismal sin, a part of Catholic discipline which the Novatians only rejected.—Socrat. Bk. v. 19.

² S. Cyp. Epist. lii. 3.

learn that Novatus had defrauded the widows and orphans under the care of the Church, sacrilegiously appropriated her money, turned his own father out of doors, and having suffered him to die of hunger, left him without burial ; besides other crimes.¹ Novatus had begun his schismatical proceedings by joining himself to Felicissimus, who was excommunicated by S. Cyprian for his factious and seditious behaviour.² Four other Priests were joined with them, and with them originated the false kindness of dispensing with penitence for the fallen, and speaking peace "where there was no peace." But there can be no stability in aught save Catholic Truth, and therefore it is no great marvel that after a time the schismatics changed their tone, and from an excessive and blameable laxity, professed an uncharitable presumptuous severity, denying the possibility of any restoration whatsoever to those who had fallen into post-baptismal sin, whatever might be the depth and sincerity of their penitence ; thus depriving the Church of that gift bestowed upon her by CHRIST Himself, the power which He committed to her in the Apostles, saying, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained"—a power never denied by any branch of the Catholic Church, and transmitted severally

¹ S. Pac. Epist. iii. 14.² S. Cyp. Epist. xlii.

to her Priests in the solemn laying on of hands in Holy Ordination.

His audacity increasing with the temerity of his doctrine, Novatus ordained Felicissimus as his deacon,¹ and went over to Rome, there also to play the part of a "firebrand," and involve others in his own guilt. The most conspicuous individual who joined the schism of Novatus was Novatian, a Roman Priest, who had been a stoic philosopher, but was baptized when on a sick bed. During the persecution he withdrew himself from his holy office out of cowardice, and "when requested and exhorted by the deacons that he should go forth from his retreat, in which he had imprisoned himself, and should come to the relief of the brethren, . . . he was so far from yielding to any exhortation of the deacons, that he went away offended and left them. For he said that he wished to be a presbyter no longer, for he was an admirer of a different philosophy."² Such was the man who now took upon himself to affirm that those who once had denied their LORD could never hope for forgiveness!

Some interval elapsed, (as we have already seen,) between the martyrdom of Fabian, Bishop of Rome, and the election of his successor. Shortly before the termination of Decius' reign, Cornelius was

¹ Epist. lii. 3.

² Euseb. vi. 43.

elected to fill the honorable but dangerous post. That he was eminently calculated for it is undoubted. S. Cyprian gives the following testimony to his merits, "He neither himself asked nor wished for the Episcopate, . . . but was quiet in all respects and meek, and such as they are wont to be, who are chosen of God to this office. . . . He was made Bishop by very many of our colleagues then present in Rome, who sent us letters, touching his ordination, remarkable for their high and honorable testimony and praise. Cornelius, moreover, was made Bishop by the Judgment of God and His CHRIST, by the testimony of almost all the clergy, by the suffrages of the people who were then present, and by the College of ancient Priests and good men. . . . Moreover, what an excellent courage was there in his taking his Episcopate! what strength of mind, what firmness of faith! . . . that he sat fearless at Rome in the sacerdotal chair, at that time when the tyrant¹ was threatening whatever can or cannot be uttered; one who would with much more patience hear that a rival prince was raised against himself, than a Bishop of God established at Rome."²

Against Cornelius, however, Novatian sought to raise a faction, accusing him of various crimes, amongst others of receiving the lapsed into com-

¹ Decius. ² Epist. lv. 7. See also S. Pac. Epist. ii. 14.

munions without due penitence. This was an utterly false accusation of course.¹ Novatian's opposition was too feeble to hinder Cornelius's election, but it placed the opposer himself in a position ripe and ready to fall in with the schism of Novatus, who having already "made a Deacon against the Church," hesitated not to proceed a step further, and make a Bishop.² He and Novatian persuaded three provincial Bishops to come to Rome and confer an illegal and schismatical ordination upon the latter; of these Bishops, one soon after, with tears of humility and penitence, confessed the error into which he had been betrayed, the other two were deposed by the Church, and successors appointed to their dioceses.³

On S. Cyprian's return to Carthage, messengers arrived both from the Bishop Cornelius, and from Novatian, who styled himself Bishop of Rome, but inasmuch as his ordination was wholly invalid, S. Cyprian, "troubled at the wickedness of an illegal ordination made contrary to the Catholic Church, forthwith determined to forbid them our communion, refuting meanwhile and rebutting the things which they essayed obstinately and pertinaciously to assert."⁴ S. Cyprian, with his usual fervent desire to promote unity and concord in that fold

¹ S. Cyp. Epist. lv. 8, 9. Socrat. Bk. iv. 28.

² Epist. lii. 3.

³ Euseb. vi. 43.

⁴ Epist. xlv.

which has One Shepherd, sent Caldonius and Fortunatus, two African Bishops, to Rome, that they might "endeavour as far as they could, and labour effectually to bring back the divided body to the unity of the Catholic Church, and to knit them together in the bond of Christian love."¹ But finding that the "self-willed and inflexible obstinacy" of the adverse party continued in their guilt, "contrary to the mystery of the Divine appointment and Catholic unity once delivered, setting up an adulterous and opposed head without the Church," with sorrow and charitable pity, he rejected them as schismatics. The councils both of Carthage and Rome, had already pronounced the doctrine concerning the Lapsi held by Novatus and Novatian to be an "uncharitable and most inhuman opinion, held only by those who were alienated from the Church."²

S. Cyprian's own words were now being fulfilled, that "that persecution is not the only one to be feared, which advances by open assault to the ruin and assault of God's servants, . . . but more to be feared is a foe, who creeps upon us unawares, who deceives under the image of peace."³ Such foes were these sons of the Church who now were seeking to rend and devour her. Their guilt is

¹ Epist. xlv.

² Euseb. vi. 43.

³ De Unit. 1.

forcibly described by S. Cyprian ; “ The episcopate is one ; it is a whole, in which each enjoys full possession. The Church is likewise one, though she be spread abroad, and multiplies with the increase of her progeny ; even as the sun has rays many, yet one light ; and the tree boughs many, yet its strength is one, seated in the deep-lodged root ; and as when many streams flow down from one source, though a multiplicity of waters seems to be diffused from the bountifulness of the overflowing abundance, unity is preserved in the source itself. Part a ray of the sun from its orb, and its unity forbids this division of light ; break a branch from the tree, once broken it can bud no more ; cut the stream from its fountain, the remnant will be dried up. Thus the Church, flooded with the light of the LORD, puts forth her rays through the whole world, with yet one light, which is spread upon all places, while its unity of body is not infringed. She stretches forth her branches over the universal earth, in the riches of plenty, and pours abroad her bountiful and onward streams ; yet is there one Head, one Source, one Mother, abundant in the results of her fruitfulness. It is of her womb that we are born ; our nourishing is from her milk, our quickening from her breath. The spouse of CHRIST cannot become adulterate, she is undefiled and chaste ; owning but one home,

and guarding with virtuous modesty the sanctity of one chamber. She it is who keeps us for God, and appoints unto the kingdom the sons she has borne. Whosoever parts company with the Church, and joins himself to an adulteress, is estranged from the promises of the Church. He who leaves the Church of CHRIST, attains not to CHRIST's rewards. He is an alien, an outcast, an enemy. He can no longer have GOD for a Father, who has not the Church for a Mother. If any man was able to escape, who remained without the ark of Noah, then will that man escape who is out of doors beyond the Church. The LORD warns us and says: 'He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who gathereth not with Me scattereth.' He who breaks the peace and concord of CHRIST, sets himself against CHRIST. He who gathers elsewhere but in the Church, scatters the Church of CHRIST. . . . Let no one think that they can be good men who leave the Church. Wind does not take the wheat, nor do storms overthrow the tree that has a solid root to rest on. It is the light straw that the tempest tosses, it is the trees emptied of their strength that the blow of the whirlwind strikes down. Of these the Apostle S. John says: 'They went forth from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, surely they would have remained with us.' . . . And

the LORD says : ‘ They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Water, and hewed them out broken cisterns, which can hold no water.’ Men who set up separate meetings for worship, have left the Fountain Head and origin of Truth. Thinks he that he is with CHRIST, who does counter to the Priests of CHRIST ? who separates himself from the fellowship of His Clergy and people ? That man bears arms against the Church, he withstands GOD’s appointments ; an enemy to the Altar, a rebel against the Sacrifice of CHRIST, for faith perfidious, for religion sacrilegious, a servant not obedient, a son not pious, a brother not loving ; setting Bishops at nought, and deserting the Priests of GOD, he dares to build another altar, to offer another prayer with unlicensed words, to profane by false sacrifices the truth of the LORD’s Sacrifice. He is not permitted to a knowledge of what he does, since he who strives against the appointment of GOD, is punished by the Divine censure for the boldness of his daring.”¹

Besides sending the episcopal messengers of peace, S. Cyprian wrote to those confessors who were misled by the schismatics, urging them, in gentle, though forcible language, to cease from their unlawful division ;² and they, “perceiving their error, returned with singleness of purpose to

¹ De Unit. 4, 9, 10, 11, 14.

² Epist. xlv.

the Church whence they had departed.”¹ Theirs had been the error of ignorance, not of wilful sin; and such are always ready to “come to the light,” and have their “deeds reprov’d.” There was great joy in the Church of Carthage when this intelligence was received; and S. Cyprian wrote a most paternal epistle, congratulating them on their restoration to the truth, and sending them his two treatises on the lapsed, and on the unity of the Church.²

Scarcely had these internal troubles met with this check, when new trials and dangers from without began to assail the Church. S. Cyprian received warning in a vision that another fierce battle was at hand:³ and under Gallus, the successor to the Emperor Decius, the persecution began afresh. Accordingly, like a good general, the Bishop gathered together his forces, and strove in all possible ways to arm CHRIST’S soldiers for the impending hour of strife. “We have not so given in our names for warfare, as to think only of peace, and decline and refuse warfare, since our LORD, the Pattern of humility, endurance, and suffering, first walked in the same warfare; that so what He taught should be done, He should first do, and what He exhorteth to suffer, Himself should first suffer for us.”⁴ “Men are trained and

¹ Epist. xlix.

² Epist. liv.

³ Epist. lvii.

⁴ Epist. lviii. 3.

prepared for secular contests, and they account it a mark of great honor if they happen to be crowned in the sight of the people, and the presence of the emperor. Behold a sublime and mighty contest, glorious with the prize of a heavenly crown, in which GOD beholds us contending; and extending His vision over those whom He hath vouchsafed to make sons, He delighteth in beholding our struggle. GOD beholds us fighting and engaging in the conflict of faith; His angels behold us; CHRIST also beholds us. How great the dignity of glory, how great the happiness, to engage in the Presence of GOD, and to be crowned by CHRIST our Judge.”¹ Cornelius was now to enter upon his reward. He was banished to Civita Vecchia, where he received a last letter from S. Cyprian, who takes leave of him, saying, “Whichsoever of us shall, by the speediness of the Divine vouchsafement, go hence the first, let our love continue in the Presence of the LORD; cease not our prayers for our brethren and sisters in the Presence of the Mercy of the FATHER.”² On the 14th September, 252, S. Cornelius received his crown of martyrdom;³ “a peaceable and righteous Priest, by the favor of the LORD honored with martyrdom.”⁴ He was succeeded by Lucius, who was banished as soon as

¹ Epist. lviii. 9.

² Epist. lx.

³ Tillemont, iii. 468.

⁴ S. Cyp. Epist. lxxvii. 6.

elected, restored to his See, and finally died a martyr's death (probably in prison¹) within the short space of six months.

Another source of trial came from the Hand of God upon both Christians and heathens,—a severe famine, with its usual result, raging pestilence. At one time, 5,000 persons are said to have died daily in Rome alone.² All men were filled with tears and mourning; desolation was spread everywhere.³ The nature of the disease was fearful in itself,—blinding fever, burning wounds breaking out, often limbs and portions of the body mortifying and falling off.⁴ The attending circumstances were full of horror; panic and terror seized all men; the fear of infection became paramount over all the natural affections and sympathies. Those whose friends were infected carried them out of their houses to die; multitudes of the dead and dying lay in every street of the city of Carthage, whilst thieves and robbers carried on their unlawful deeds almost unmolested.⁵ No one seemed to have any thought beyond his personal interest. This was the time for a Christian Bishop to come forward. Nor was S. Cyprian found wanting. Gathering the people together, he told them how pleasing in

¹ Tillemont. S. Cyp. Ar. 32.

² Gibbon, i. 10.

³ Euseb. vii. 22.

⁴ S. Cyp. de Mort. 9.

⁵ Pont. Vit. 10.

the Sight of GOD are the deeds of brotherly kindness done to our brethren, and exhorted them not only to minister, as far as in them lay, to the necessities of their Christian brethren, but to all men whatsoever,—heathens and publicans alike with believers ; reminding them Who makes the sun to shine alike on the evil and the good.

Nor were the Bishop's exhortations fruitless. His people immediately commenced ordered and well-disposed systems for relieving the afflicted ; some contributing their money, others their still more precious personal services.¹ To aid in allaying the general alarm, which prevailed even amongst the Christians, S. Cyprian wrote to them on the subject ; urging that, to the baptized Christian, ever on the watch, no death can come suddenly or amiss. "Let him fear to die," he says, "who is unborn of water and of the Spirit, who is without title in the Cross and Passion of CHRIST, who is to pass from death here into the second death ; . . . but the righteous are called to their refreshment, . . . to their speedier deliverance."² "We," continues S. Cyprian, "ought not to sorrow for those our brethren, who by the LORD's summons have been set at liberty from the life below ; assured that they are not gone away, but gone forward ; that in departing from us they are but leading the

¹ Pont. Vit. 10.

² De Mort. 10.

way, as is men's wont in a journey, or upon a voyage; that we owe them our affection rather than our lamentations, and ought not to put on the garb of black here, while they have already taken on them white raiment there: since occasion must not be given to the Gentiles for the deserved and just reproach, that while we say of men, they are alive with God, we mourn for them as extinct and perished; and that a faith which we manifest by language and utterance, is disproved in the testimony of our feeling and thoughts. . . .

"If we believe in CHRIST, let us put faith in His words and promises; and since we shall not die eternally, let us pass in joyful assurance unto CHRIST, with Whom for ever we shall both live and reign. In dying at this present, by death gain the transit to immortality; eternal life cannot follow, unless it has been given us to depart hence; nor is this departure, but transition; when the journey of time is concluded, a transit unto things eternal. Who will not make speed unto the better things? Who does not long to be changed and made anew unto the Likeness of CHRIST, and to gain an earlier entrance to the dignity of heavenly grace?"¹ He concludes with the following beautiful passage, "We ought to consider, dearest brethren, that we have renounced the world, and are

¹ Ib. 15, 16.

continuing here, for this mean season, as strangers and pilgrims. Let us embrace the day, which makes over each of us to his own resting place, which after receiving us hence, and ridding us of the chains of earth, places us back in paradise, and in the Heavenly Kingdom. What man that is journeying abroad, doth not hasten backward to his native land? Who that is speeding a voyage towards them he loves, longs not with more ardour for a prosperous wind, so that he may embrace his friends the sooner? Paradise we are to reckon for our native land; patriarchs are now our parents: wherefore not haste and run, to behold our country, to salute our parents? It is a large and loving company who expect us there; parents, brothers, children, a manifold and numerous assemblage longing after us, who having security of their own immortality, still feel anxious for our own salvation. What a common gladness, both to them and to us, when we pass into their presence and their embrace! and O sweet heavenly realms, where death can never terrify, and life can never end! Ah, perfect and perpetual bliss! There is the glorious company of the Apostles; there is the assembly of Prophets exulting; there is the innumerable multitude of Martyrs, crowned after their victory of strife and passion; there are virgins, triumphant over the body; there are merciful men, obtaining

mercy, who fulfilled the work of righteousness by dealing food and bounty to the poor, and in obedience to the instructions of the LORD translated the inheritance of earth into the treasuries of Heaven. To these, dearest brethren, let us with eager longings, hasten ; let it be the portion which we desire, speedily to be among them, speedily to be gone to CHRIST. God behold this thought of ours ! This purpose of our mind and faith may the LORD CHRIST witness, Who will make the recompenses of His glory the larger according as man's longings after Him have been the stronger."¹ Well was he who wrote thus prepared to depart and be with CHRIST, but his time was not yet come. Much remained for him to do in the service of his Master, and he patiently tarried until the joyful call was given to summon him to his country and his FATHER.

¹ De Mort. 20.

CHAPTER III.

"The lesse our sorrowes here, and suff'rings cease,
The more our crownes of glory there increase."

HERRICK.

PUBLIC CALAMITIES. — ACCESSION OF VALERIAN. — THE CHRISTIANS DEFENDED BY S. CYPRIAN. — NUMIDIAN CAPTIVES. — CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EUCHARIST. — CONCERNING BAPTISM. — COUNCIL CONCERNING LAPSED BISHOPS. — MARCIANUS OF ARLES. — BAPTISM OF HERETICS. — COUNCILS OF CARTHAGE. — PERSECUTION UNDER VALERIAN. — S. CYPRIAN IS BANISHED TO CURUBIS. — A VISION IS VOUCHSAFED HIM. — HIS OCCUPATION WHILST IN EXILE. — HE IS RECALLED TO CARTHAGE. — HIS LAST LETTER. — HE IS TAKEN PRISONER. — HIS TRIAL — AND SENTENCE — AND EXECUTION.

PERPLEXITIES and distress of nations had come on the earth, so that one cannot marvel if holy men looked upon them as the probable forerunners of the destruction of the world. Drought consumed the earth, which denied her usual fruits, hailstorms and whirlwinds had blasted the vine and olive, pestilence and disease carried off their multitudes, as we have seen,¹ and wars, invasions and usurpations made

¹ Ad Demet. 3.

the Roman empire one vast scene of confusion and calamity. In the year 253, the Emperor Gallus was abandoned and murdered by his armies, who were bribed by Æmilius, the governor of Pannonia, who in his turn, within four months, received retribution at the hands of Valerian. It was no new cry that all these troubles came upon the empire by reason of the Christians, whose religion offended the heathen deities whom they refused to worship.¹ Such a cry was now raised, and in reply to it, S. Cyprian addressed a book or tract to Demetrianus, governor of Africa,² in which he argues against the injustice and vanity of this accusation, and in the course of it, he draws a beautiful picture of the position held by the faithful believer in the midst of earthly trial and tribulation. "Worldly ills are a punishment felt by him, whose happiness and glory are all in the world. He weeps and groans at what goes ill with him in this life, to whom nothing can go well when life is past, who takes all the fruit of living now, shuts his consolation within this present place, and has his measure of gratifica-

¹ Tertul. Apol. xl. "If the Tiber cometh up to the walls, if the Nile cometh not up to the fields, if the heaven hath stood still, if the earth hath been moved, if there be any famine, if any pestilence, 'the Christians to the lion,' is forthwith the word."

² Baronius, quoted by Tillemont, tome iv. 123.

tion and enjoyment, in this frail and brief existence; gone hence, no more remains but penalty and sorrow. They on the other hand have no pain from present ills occurring, who look with confidence to good things in futurity; in truth we are not overwhelmed by adverse things, never broken-spirited, nor sorrowful; no voice of mourning escapes from us, under whatever calamity of circumstance, or weakness of body. Living rather in the spirit than in the flesh, we put away the insufficiency of the body, by the strength of the soul. By these very things which torture and weary us, we know and are confident, that our trial and our strength are wrought. . . . We have a grave and religious patience, which is always quiet, and always gives its thanks to God, which lays no claim to happiness or prosperity here, but meekly and gently, and strong among the winds of this tumultuous world, abides the time of God's promise. As long as the body lasts, it needs must have the common nature and share in the general condition; none of man's race can be sundered from the rest, till after its departure from this present life; in the mean season, good or bad, we are contained within one house; all that happens within that house we bear in common; until the limit of the world's period be gained, and we are distributed among the mansions whether of death or life eternal. . . . There

thrives among us the vigour of hope and the steadfastness of faith; there is, amidst the ruins of a falling world, a mind erect and virtue ever stayed, a patience always rejoicing, a soul ever confident in its God, even as the HOLY SPIRIT speaks by the Prophet, sustaining the steadfastness of our hope and faith by heavenly words. (Hab. iii. 17.)”¹ In keeping with his usual fervent charity and love to all men, friends or enemies, are S. Cyprian’s parting words, after urging Demetrianus to accept the offered gift of salvation, “Believe and live: you have been our persecutors in time; in eternity be companions of our joy.”²

Probably about the same time (early in the year 253) the barbarians made a descent upon Numidia, and carried many of the Christians captive, upon which their brethren in Carthage, both clergy and laity, made great efforts to raise a sufficient sum for their ransom.³ S. Cyprian had always trained his people to be zealous in the great duty of almsgiving, as may be seen from his treatise on that subject, where he speaks very forcibly on the blessing and cleansing power attendant on almsdeeds, which with righteous works, “set at rest the flame of offences.” After enumerating various Scriptural illustrations concerning the healing efficacy of almsgiving, he concludes thus: “Saving works of

¹ Ad Demet. 11.² Ad Demet. 14.³ Epist. lxii.

bounty, are a glorious and divine thing, the high comfort of believers, the wholesome safeguard of our security, defence of hope, guard of faith, medicine of sin; a thing placed in the doer's power, a thing both great and easy; a peaceful crown without the peril of persecution, GOD's true and greatest service, to the weak needful, to the strong glorious, aided by which the Christian holds on in spiritual grace, earns favor of CHRIST, the Judge, and accounts GOD his Debtor."¹ How abundantly S. Cyprian acted upon this doctrine, as well as inculcated it, we have already seen.²

¹ De Oper. 21.

² How completely our own Church follows the tone of S. Cyprian's teaching on this subject may be seen in the Homily on Almsdeeds, Pt. ii. which says: "That holy Father Cyprian taketh good occasion to exhort earnestly to the merciful work of giving alms and helping the poor, and he admonisheth to consider how wholesome and profitable it is to relieve the needy, and help the afflicted, by which we may purge our sins, and heal our wounded souls. But some will say unto me, if almsgiving and our charitable works towards the poor be able to wash away sins, to reconcile us to GOD, to deliver us from the peril of damnation, and make us the sons and heirs of GOD's Kingdom, then are CHRIST's Merits defaced, and His Blood shed in vain; then are we justified by works, and by our deeds may we merit heaven; then do we in vain believe that CHRIST died to put away our sins, and that He rose for our justification, as S. Paul teacheth. But ye shall understand, dearly beloved, that neither those places of the Scripture before alleged,

The storm of persecution from without having abated, we find S. Cyprian occupied with a variety of matters, more or less nearly concerning the internal welfare of the Church. In the times of persecution, certain priests had adopted the practice of administering, not wine, but water in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, for fear lest the scent of wine should lead to the discovery of the communicants. S. Cyprian addressed an epistle repre-

neither the doctrine of the blessed martyr Cyprian, neither any other godly and learned man, when they, in extolling the dignity, profit, fruit, and effect of virtuous and liberal alms, do say that it washeth away sins, and bringeth us to the favor of God, do mean that our work and charitable deed is the original cause of our acception before God, or that for the dignity or worthiness thereof our sins may be washed away, and are purged and cleansed of all the spots of our iniquity; for that were indeed to deface CHRIST, and to defraud Him of His glory. But they mean this, and this is the understanding of those and such-like sayings, that God of His mercy and special favor towards them, whom He hath appointed to everlasting salvation, hath so offered His Grace especially, and they have so received it fruitfully, that although, by reason of their sinful living outwardly, they seemed before to have been the children of wrath and perdition, yet now the Spirit of God mightily working in them, unto obedience to God's Will and Commandments, they declare, by their outward deeds and life, in the showing of mercy and charity (which cannot come but of the Spirit of God and His special grace) that they are the undoubted children of God appointed to everlasting life."

hending this custom, and showing that wine has always been the type of the SAVIOUR'S Blood, whereas water is always employed as typical of baptism, so that though the mingling of the two (according to the primitive custom) is scripturally and typically correct, the use of water alone interferes with the right celebration of the solemn sacrifice, and is a perversion of the truth.¹

Another matter of controversy arose concerning the proper period for baptizing infants; one Fidus having asserted that that sacrament should not be administered on the third or fourth day, but withheld until the eighth day, being that appointed under the law for the rite of circumcision.² S. Cyprian decides against Fidus' new doctrine, not wishing for one day unnecessarily to withhold the saving rite from GOD'S little ones, "who," he says, "the more deserve our aid and the Divine Mercy, that immediately on the very dawn of their birth, lamenting and weeping, they do nothing else but ask for mercy."

A council was held at Carthage concerning two Bishops,—Basilides of Asturica, and Martialis of Emerita, in Spain,—who were among the lapsed; and inasmuch as the Priesthood should, above all men, be faithful, these Bishops were deposed; but, upon due repentance, they might be re-admitted to

¹ Epist. lxiii. ad Cæcil.

² Epist. lxiv. ad Fid.

the Church's communion, as laymen only.¹ Marcianus, Bishop of Arles, having joined the Novatians, Faustinus, Bishop of Lyons, called for the assistance of S. Cyprian, and of Stephen, Bishop of Rome, (the successor to Lucius,) in enforcing his deposition; and S. Cyprian accordingly wrote to the Roman Prelate on the subject, not in any way arrogating to himself any undue or special authority, but speaking of the body of Bishops as "united together by the glue of mutual concord, and the bond of unity," and therefore bound to render every possible assistance to one another in the cause to which they were all devoted.²

But the principal of all these matters was the controversy concerning the baptism of heretics. S. Cyprian warmly maintained that the baptism administered by heretics or schismatics, was, in fact, no baptism at all; and that therefore those who, having received this invalid and heretical rite, were afterwards admitted into the Church, must be, not *re*-baptized, but baptized; the Church owning but one baptism, and that administered by heretics not counting as any baptism. This doctrine was decided upon in a council of seventy-one Bishops of Africa and Numidia.³ Bishop Stephen, however, held the opposite opinion, and a council having been held at Iconium, in which Firmilian,

¹ Epist. lxxvii.

² Epist. lxxviii.

³ Epist. lxxii.

Bishop of Cappadocia, (the friend of Origen,) took part, which decided in favor of S. Cyprian's views, Stephen excommunicated that synod, on account of their opinion.¹ Another council, held at Carthage, consisting of eighty-seven Bishops, came to a similar conclusion with that of Iconium. Most bitterly indeed did S. Cyprian now feel his position of opposition to so large a portion of the Catholic Church; but the spirit of patience and love of unity forsook him not. His treatises on patience, and against envy, were written at this time, and what he taught, that he practised. "Let but patience be in the breast, and anger, discord, hatred, will not be able to find room in it; or if they attempt to enter, they are soon excluded, and depart, that the home of peace may have continuance in a heart where it delights the God of peace to dwell."² Every word of both treatises contains a fruitful lesson in meekness and Christian feeling.

We avoid the details of this controversy, the conclusion of which was, that many who had sided with S. Cyprian went from him to the opposite party; and rather than pass any judgment on the "blessed Cyprian, whom the holy mother, the Church, counts among those few and rare men of most excellent grace," we would conclude the sub-

¹ Epist. lxxv. 26, Firmil. ad Cyp.

² De Pat. 10.

ject with S. Augustine's words. "Reading and re-reading these peaceful strains, (i.e. S. Cyprian's epistles,) I cannot therewith be sated; there ex-haleth from them such a pleasurable sense of brotherly love; there overfloweth such mighty sweetness of charity. . . In his words are many things to be considered, wherein the radiance of Christian charity gleams forth in this man, who 'loved the beauty of the house of the LORD, and the place of the tabernacle of His habitation.' First, that what he held, he expressed; then that he uttered it so mildly and peacefully, in that he maintained the peace of the Church with those who held otherwise, appreciating the healthfulness of the bond of unity,—loved it so much, and upheld it in sobriety,—saw and felt that they too who held otherwise, could so hold without injury to charity. For not with evil men would he say that he 'maintained the Divine harmony, and the peace of the LORD;' for a good man may have peace toward the evil, but cannot maintain with them that peace which they maintain not. Finally, 'prescribing to, and prejudging no one,—that each Bishop should not do what he thinks right, having the free exercise of his own judgment,'—he left room for even such as ourselves, to treat of those things in peace with him. For he is present with us, not only by his writings, but still more by that very charity which lived so mightily

in him, and could never die. Longing, then, to cleave to, and be knit in one with him, if I be not hindered by the disharmony of my sins, aided by his prayers, I will, if I may, learn by his epistles with what exceeding peace and consolation the LORD, through him, governed His Church; and through the tender influence of writings, clad with the loving feelings of humility, if with the whole Church I in anything hold more truly, yet will I not prefer my own heart to his, even wherein he, holding otherwise, was yet not severed from the whole Church. For the might of his excellence stood out more eminently, in that, while that question was pending, not having been yet discussed, he, holding differently from many of his colleagues, maintained such moderation, as by no taint of schism to maim the holy society of the Church of God, than if, without that virtue, he had in all things held rightly, and as they. For I should not please him were I to seem to prefer his genius and power of speech, and richness of teaching, to that holy council of all nations, whereat he too was present, through the unity of the Spirit; especially where he now is, placed in such full light of truth, where he seeth most certainly what here most peacefully he sought. For out of that rich abundance he smileth on all this seeming eloquence of ours, as the unformed essays of infancy; there he seeth

by what rule of piety he here acted, in that nothing was dearer to him than the unity of the Church ; there too, with pleasurable ineffable, he beholdeth by what all-merciful dispensations of His Providence the LORD, in order to heal our swellings, ‘ chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,’ and in the ranks of the members of His Church hath ordered all so healthfully, that no one should say that for any talents or learning, which he as yet knew not by Whose gift he had, he was chosen to the help of the Gospel, and so be inflated with a pestilential pride. O how doth Cyprian rejoice ! with what deeper calmness doth he there behold, how exceeding healthfully it was ordered for man’s salvation, that even in the Christian holy writings of well-skilled men there may be found what justly may be censured, but in the writings of the fishermen is not so found ! Fully assured of this joy of that holy soul, I neither venture any way to think or to affirm that my own writings are free from all error ; nor as to this, his opinion, wherein he judged that such as came from heretics were to be received otherwise than in times past they had been, (as himself testifieth,) or now are, is it my own opinion which I prefer to his, but that of the holy Catholic Church, which he so loved and loveth, in which he bore such abundant ‘ fruit with patience ;’ whose entireness he

alone was not, yet in its entireness he remained ; whose stock he never quitted, but ‘bearing fruit’ in it, was ‘that he might bring forth more fruit,’ purged by the Heavenly Husbandman ; for whose peace and unity, ‘lest with the tares there be plucked up the wheat’ also,—those exceeding evils of men placed with himself in that unity,—he both with the freedom of truth reprovèd, and with the grace of charity endured.”¹

“One year of this sorrow brought him within a year of his glory.” God had granted to His Church a breathing time, and now once more He permitted the cloud of persecution to lower upon her, under the rule of Valerian.

On the 30th of August, A.D. 257, Paternus, the proconsul of Carthage, summoned the Bishop to the council chamber, and on his appearance, announced to him the will of the Emperor, that all such as did not observe the heathen rites of the Roman religion, should now profess their belief in, and return to it. Then, as a matter of form, Paternus inquiring his name, S. Cyprian replied : “I am a Christian, and a Bishop ; I know no other Gods beside the One and True God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein ; this God we Christians serve, to Him we pray day and

¹ De Bapt. v. 17, 22, 23. See Oxf. edit. S. Cyp. Epist. note to p. 258.

night, for ourselves, for all mankind, for the health of the Emperors themselves."

The Proconsul asked whether this was his final determination. The Bishop answered: "That good purpose which hath once acknowledged God, cannot be changed." His sentence of banishment to Curubis, was received with no other answer than "I go." Before dismissing him, the Proconsul endeavoured to gain from S. Cyprian information respecting his Priests, but he reminded Paternus of the Roman law, forbidding any to be an informer, and declined to make the required declaration, adding, that though the Christians did not consider it lawful to thrust themselves needlessly upon persecution, still that they would be found each in his appointed place of duty. Paternus further told him that he was enjoined to prohibit the Christian assemblies on pain of death. S. Cyprian only replied: "Do according to your injunctions."¹ Thus for the second time the faithful pastor left his flock. But "to the Christian the whole world is a home."²

Curubis was a maritime city of Zengitania, about forty miles distant from Carthage, a pleasant and fertile spot.³ On the day of S. Cyprian's arrival there, a divine vision was vouchsafed to him, which he himself narrated to his deacon Pontius, who

¹ S. Cyp. Act.

² Pont. Vit. 11.

³ Gibbon, i. 16.

was his faithful companion in exile. Before he fell asleep, there appeared to him a young man of gigantic stature, who as he thought, led him to the Prætorium, before the Proconsul's tribunal. "He on seeing me, forthwith began to write down upon a tablet a sentence, which I knew not, for he had not asked me questions in the usual form; however, that young man who stood behind his back, with great anxiety read whatever had been set down. And, since he could not utter it in words, he intimated it by signs, which declared what was in the writing of that tablet. For opening his hand and flattening it like a blade, and imitating the blow of customary execution, he expressed what he would have signified as if in clear words. I understood the future sentence of my passion. I began at once to ask and seek, that the delay even of one day might be given me, in order to my settling my affairs in a regular way. After I had frequently repeated my prayer, he began again to set down something on the tablet. I perceived, however, from the serenity of his countenance, that the judge's mind was influenced by the request, as if reasonable. Moreover, that youth, who already had divulged somewhat by gesture, if not by word, concerning my passion, made haste to signify by secret signs from time to time, twisting his fingers one behind another, that the delay

was granted which I asked until the morrow. For me, although the sentence was not read, while my heart exulted at the pleasant news of delay granted, yet such was my alarm, from the chance of mistaking the interpretation, that it was still all in flutter and agitation from the remains of apprehension."¹

That apprehension which S. Cyprian felt at the prospect of life, greater than what many have experienced at the thought of death, soon passed away, and that which he foresaw in his vision was fulfilled to the letter. Meanwhile, the "delay of the one day," or year, was spent in accordance with the rest of his Christian life, providing for the poor and needy, and by all means in his power strengthening the faith of those who remained. Many of his brethren came to visit him, and none departed without new courage and energy. But a few letters written at this period are known to us. To Nemesianus and other martyrs, who were banished to the mines, he wrote in terms of commendation and encouragement, telling them when they were bruised with clubs to think of the Wood (the Holy Cross), whence they had received life; in the mines of gold and silver, to remember that they themselves were God's vessels of gold; and then enthusiastically looking to the time when he and they shall be made free, he exclaims: "This

¹ Pont. Vit. 12.

brief suffering in time, for what a reward will it be exchanged of bright and eternal glory, when, according to the saying of the blessed Apostle, the LORD shall change our vile body, that it may be fashione dlike unto His Glorious Body!

Pray and entreat ye that the Divine Mercy would perfect the confession of us all, that so GOD would free us also together with you, unharmed and glorious, from this darkness and these entanglements of the world; that so we, who have here united in the body of Charity and peace, have stood together against the assaults of heretics and the persecutions of the Gentiles, may also rejoice together in the heavenly kingdoms. I bid you, most blessed and most beloved brethren, heartily farewell in the LORD, and always and every where remember me."¹ Three letters of sympathy from the confessors to S. Cyprian remain.

The year of delay was fast passing away, when a yet more pressing edict having been issued by Valerian, Galerius Maximus (who had succeeded Paternus as Proconsul) summoned S. Cyprian to Carthage. He accordingly left Curubis, and took up his abode in his own gardens, just without the city of Carthage, where he was met by the intelligence of the martyrdom of Sixtus,² who had ten months before succeeded Stephen in the See of

¹ Epist. lxxvi.

² Epist. lxxx.

Rome. S. Cyprian needed not this warning to tell him that his own hour was fast drawing nigh. Many eminent and illustrious men, for the sake of their former friendship with the saint, came to see him, and urged him to fly; but Pontius says: "His mind hanging upon heaven, he had put the world out of sight, and consented not to their persuasive solicitations."¹ He did consent, however, for a short time to conceal himself, on occasion of the Proconsul's removal to Utica, where he intended to pass sentence upon S. Cyprian. The last letter addressed by the holy man to his Priests, Deacons, and people, explains his motives for this concealment.

"When news was brought me, dearest brethren, that gaolers had been sent to bring me to Utica, and friends very dear to me counselled and persuaded me to withdraw for a while from my gardens, there being adequate grounds, I consented; for that it is fitting that a Bishop should confess the LORD in that city, in which he presides over the Church of the LORD, and that the whole people should derive glory from the confession of their prelate in their presence. For whatever a Bishop who is a confessor, speaks at that moment of confession, he speaks by inspiration of God in the mouth of all. But the honor of our Church

¹ Pont. Vit. 14.

so glorious will be maimed, if I, a Bishop set over another Church, receiving my sentence on confession at Utica, should go thence a martyr to the LORD; whereas I both for myself and for you, intreat with continual supplications, and long earnestly with my whole heart's desire in all my prayers, as I ought, that I may confess amongst you, and there suffer, and thence go to the LORD. Being therefore here in concealed retirement, we await the approach of the Proconsul on his return from Carthage, to hear from him what commands the Emperors have given concerning Christian laymen and Bishops, and to say what the LORD will have said in that hour. But do ye, dearest brethren, according to the discipline which ye have ever received from me out of the precepts of the LORD, and according to what ye have very often learnt from my preaching, maintain quiet and tranquillity: let not any of you occasion any disturbance to the brethren, or offer himself of his own accord to the Gentiles. For being apprehended and delivered up, ought he to speak; forasmuch as the LORD, dwelling in us, speaketh in us in that hour; Who willed, rather that we should confess than profess. But what in other respects it becomes us to do, before the Proconsul passes sentence on me on confessing the Name of God, we will, as the LORD shall instruct, determine

in common. May our LORD cause you to abide safe in His Church, dearest brethren, and may He vouchsafe to preserve you. So be it through His mercy.”¹

Almost immediately after this simple and touching epistle was written, the Proconsul returned to Carthage, upon which S. Cyprian went back to his gardens, meekly and calmly to await the crown of martyrdom, upon which the inward eyes of his soul had so long gazed. Each day he awaited that summons whence he knew he never should return. On the 13th September the chief gaoler and the captain of the guard came to take him into custody. S. Cyprian arose at once and accompanied them, his calm cheerful countenance² corresponding with his serene and faithful heart. He was conveyed to Sexti, a place six miles distant from Carthage, to which the Proconsul had retired for the benefit of his health. But the day foretold as that of his martyrdom had not arrived, and the Saint was remanded till the next morning, and was accordingly lodged in the house of one Galerius's officials. Crowds both of Christians and heathens assembled thither to see the eminent man, whose friends and companions were permitted to remain with him, whilst large numbers of the people kept their vigil without, surrounding the door, dreading lest their

¹ Epist. lxxx.

² Pont. Vit. 15.

pastor should be led out to his martyrdom in some private underhand manner.

At last, the 14th of September dawned, the anniversary of the day on which the vision concerning his death had been granted to the Saint. It was a bright, clear day, and the sun shone brilliantly on the noble-hearted Prelate, as he advanced towards the judgment hall, attended by so vast a multitude, "that it seemed," says Pontius, "as though he was coming with troops in array to subdue death."¹ It so happened that the procession passed the race-course, which seemed to the Christians present a happy coincidence for one who was running for the crown of righteousness, and had just finished his labours.

When they arrived at the Prætorium, Galerius was not yet ready, and S. Cyprian was conducted to a side apartment, where his attendants remarked that he yet occupied an episcopal throne, the seat whereon he sat being covered with linen, the usual covering of the Bishop's throne. One of the officers in attendance observing that S. Cyprian's garments were soiled and damp, offered to change them for fresh ones of his own, being also desirous to obtain possession of the vestments of the blessed martyr as precious relics. But the Bishop declined the offer, saying, "It is needless to seek a remedy

¹ Pont. Vit. 15.

for discomforts which perchance shall cease to-day for ever."

By this time the Proconsul had entered the court, and S. Cyprian was brought before him.¹

¹ "Such has been the secret history of Saints. Their great powers in the world were the reward of their perfect deadness to it. Because they refused its offers, therefore they became its rulers. Because they had no desire, nor love, nor appetite for it, therefore they were set to dispose of it. Because they shunned its titles and exaltations, therefore they were honored and lifted up to the thrones of power. They were true followers of Him Who, when He perceived that the people 'would come and take Him by force, and make Him a King, departed into a mountain Himself alone.' . . . They indulged themselves in no remote visions, in no restless imaginations, in no exciting self-contemplation. The whole horizon of their hearts was clear. Nothing lay beneath it disturbing the truth of their intentions. There was no end in 'life they desired, but to do the Will of God.' They had no craving for things out of their sphere, no forecasting and expectation of anything to come. What God had made them, that they deeply desired to be—to realize deeply their present lot, to live wholly in it and for it alone, to confide in it as the pledge of God's Presence. No nice calculations of probable gain, or usefulness, or power to be gotten otherwise or elsewhere, had any sway over them. They would not hesitate a moment to do acts of the highest indiscretion, as the world judges, and to throw away all promises and offers of interest and advantage, rather than seem to yield even a constructive worship to the powers of the world. They were of more price than the world: with all its gifts and all its gold, it could not buy them. These are

The trial, if such it may be called, lasted but a little while ; Galerius having inquired whether the prisoner was Thascius Cyprianus, and the Bishop having answered that he was, the Proconsul proceeded to say, "The most sacred Emperors have commanded you to conform to the Roman rites." S. Cyprian's only reply was, "I refuse to do so." Galerius warned him not to persist in his refusal, but S. Cyprian answered that Galerius had better obey the Emperor's commands, for that as for himself, being a Christian, he could not have any hesitation in the matter. For a few minutes Galerius conferred with his council, and then, (reluctantly it is said,¹) pronounced the sentence which

they 'of whom the world was not worthy.' It was cheap, slight, and paltry in their eyes ; for by faith they had already 'seen the King in His Beauty, and beheld the land which is very far off.' They had seen the throne and Him Which sat upon it, Who is 'as a jasper, and a sardine stone' to look upon ; and all earthly things waxed pale and dim. They had tasted 'the powers of the world to come,' which are perfect and eternal ; and the purest and best things of this life drew from them not desires, but tears. None so intensely perceived the good and beautiful which yet lingers on the earth ; yet they shrank from the savour of death, which by sin is shed abroad upon the creation of God. They took refuge in the unseen Kingdom, which is all pure, deathless, everlasting ; serving and waiting for Him Who 'hath made us kings and priests unto God.' "

¹ Act. Cyp.

fulfilled the Prelate's vision. "You have long lived an irreligious life, and drawn together a number of men bound by an unlawful association, and professed yourself an open enemy to the gods and the religion of Rome; and the pious, most sacred, and august Emperors, Valerian and Gallienus, have endeavoured in vain to bring you back into conformity with their religious observances; whereas then you have been apprehended as the standard bearer of the sect and principal in their infamous crimes, you shall be made an example to those whom you have wickedly associated with you; and your blood shall be shed in vindication of the law." Then followed the sentence of decapitation.

S. Cyprian calmly uttered, "Thanks be to God!" but a great excitement and agitation prevailed amongst the faithful who were present, and a loud cry proceeded from them, "We also will die with him!"

A military guard surrounded the prisoner, and a great crowd followed the procession to the place of execution, which was a large, level field, surrounded with trees; into which many of the Christians climbed, that they might behold their Bishop to the last.¹ S. Cyprian took off his upper garment, and knelt down in silent prayer. When he arose,

¹ Pont. Vit. 18.

he laid aside his dalmatic, remaining in his tunic.¹ The executioner stood trembling, as though he had not strength to perform his task; but the martyr encouraged him, and commanded his deacons to give him a present of money. Meanwhile many of the faithful had spread cloths and napkins around, to catch the blood about to flow in the cause of CHRIST. All being now prepared, S. Cyprian covered his eyes with his hands, and in another moment he had received the martyr's crown, being the first Carthaginian Bishop numbered amongst the holy army of martyrs.²

During the day-time, the earthly remains of the saint were exposed to public view; but at night the brethren came with torches, and removed the venerated corpse with solemn prayers to the burying ground of Macrobius Candidianus, in the Map-palian Way.³ In the time of S. Augustine, a Church, dedicated to S. Cyprian, stood on the spot of his interment; and thither it was that S. Monica retired to pray for her son, afterwards the worthy successor of S. Cyprian. The Church Catholic commemorates S. Cyprian on September 26th.

¹ The dalmatic was a long mantle, with sleeves; the tunic a loose white garment, corresponding to the surplice.

² A few days afterwards Galerius Maximus himself died.
Act. Cyp.

³ Act. Cyp.

His character is worthily described by an extract from one of his own works. Speaking of the will of GOD, he says, "It is what CHRIST hath done and taught; it is humility in conduct, it is steadfastness in faith, scrupulousness in our words, rectitude in our deeds, mercy in our works, governance in our habits; it is innocence of injuriousness, and patience under it, preserving peace with the brethren, loving GOD with all our heart, loving Him as our FATHER, and fearing Him as our GOD; accounting CHRIST before all things, because He accounted nothing before us; clinging inseparably to His Love; being stationed with fortitude and faith at His Cross, and when the battle comes for His Name and Honor, maintaining in words that constancy which makes confession, in torture that confidence which joins battle, and in death that patience which receives the crown. This it is, to endeavour to be co-heirs with CHRIST; this it is, to perform the commandment of GOD, and fulfil the will of the FATHER."¹

Much as all Catholic Christians owe to S. Cyprian, "the ideal of a Christian Bishop," perhaps no branch of the Church is so deeply indebted to him as our own. "With an intense feeling of the responsibility of Bishops to their LORD, he claimed for each the right of acting with no human respon-

¹ De Orat. Dom. x.

sibility, and disclaimed for himself, as Primate, the right of controlling others. . . . S. Cyprian's idea of the episcopate is manifoldness in unity; many shepherds feeding one flock, yet therefore many, that they might act in unity against any who would waste it; 'a large body, but cemented by the glue of mutual concord and bond of unity;' many rays, streams, branches, to diffuse everywhere light, fertility, nourishment, yet the connected issues from One Source. Since charity, as the condition of the Presence of the HOLY SPIRIT, is the bond which unites them, so may we trust that we, amid a forced independence, share the unity whereby S. Cyprian was held with the whole body, if we have his reverence for unity and his love. It were some earnest of its presence, if we begin to desire unity earnestly among ourselves, to act on his words,—'If two agreeing, (S. Matt. xviii. 19,) shall prevail so much, what were agreement among all? What if, in accordance with the *peace* which the LORD *gave* us, all the brethren should agree? We had long since obtained of the Divine Mercy what we ask for, nor should we be so long tossing in this peril of our salvation and our faith.' ''¹

¹ Preface to the Oxf. Edit. Epist. S. Cyp.

S. GREGORY THAUMATURGUS.

BISHOP OF NEO-CÆSAREA.

“Thine Angel led thee by the hand
To thy lov'd Origen,
Taught to forget thy father's land,
And sit with holy men.

“Through varied wilds of knowledge fair
He lured to sacred lore,
And bade thee knock with earnest prayer,
Till Faith should ope the door.

“And well I ween, that at Heaven-gate
Thy hand did knock, till Love
Came forth, all arm'd with unseen state,
The mountains to remove.

“For thou art known to latest time,
The ‘wonder-working’ sage,
Who could a rude barbaric clime
To Christian love engage.”

The Cathedral.

LIFE OF S. GREGORY THAUMATURGUS.

CHAPTER I.

“ Oh let Thy sacred Will
All Thy delight in me fulfil !
Let me not think an action mine own way,
But as Thy love shall sway
Resigning up the rudder to Thy skill.”

HERBERT.

CHARACTER OF S. GREGORY.—HIS EARLY YEARS.—HIS STUDIES.—WITH ATHENODORUS HE GOES TO BERYTUS AND CÆSAREA.—THEY BECOME PUPILS OF ORIGEN.—HIS INSTRUCTIONS.—S. GREGORY RETURNS TO NEO-CÆSAREA.—HE ABANDONS THE WORLD.—APPOINTED BISHOP OF NEO-CÆSAREA.—HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE OFFICE.—S. GREGORY'S CREED.—HE COMMANDS A HEATHEN ORACLE.—EXORCISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

OF the several men eminent for holiness and piety, who bore the name Gregory, the earliest, and not the least remarkable, is S. Gregory Thaumaturgus, to whom the latter distinguishing surname was given, signifying worker of wonders, in consequence of the remarkable and miraculous deeds which it

pleased God to work by means of this, His instrument. Nor do the wonderful records of the favor enjoyed by S. Gregory come to us from vague report or quarters not to be relied upon, but they have been preserved and narrated by holy men, not less conspicuous for the stability of their faith and the purity of their lives, than he of whom they tell, namely, S. Basil the Great, and S. Gregory of Nyssa, his brother.

The latter has left a detailed life of the great man whose name he bore, and S. Basil when speaking of many of the greatest ornaments of the Catholic Church, goes on to S. Gregory, and after enumerating some of those wonders worked by means of him, proceeds to say, that "he merits to rank amongst the Apostles and Prophets, who was inspired by the same HOLY SPIRIT, who always followed in the footsteps of the Saints, and whose whole conduct was a model of evangelical life, and he surely must be counted amongst the chosen of God, who was as a shining light in CHRIST'S Church, and who by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, made devils to tremble. That Holy Spirit of God was so fruitful in him, that even the enemies of the truth called him a second Moses."

S. Gregory, whose original name was Theodorus, was a native of Neo-Cæsarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia. His parents were of illustrious family,

and from their rank and fortune, enjoyed an exalted position in the world. But they were heathens, and their children were brought up under the dark cloud of idolatry. When Gregory was fourteen years of age, his father, who had been very indefatigable in training him in the observance of his own superstitious rites, died, and the care of Gregory, his brother Athenodorus, and a sister, fell to their mother. Gregory, whose high intellectual powers had been carefully cultivated, was already beginning to be dissatisfied with the heathen religion in which he had been educated, and much of which met with its contradiction from the mere light of reason, as study opened and quickened his mind. God was beginning to lead him to the knowledge of the truth, and he himself says that his guardian angel was permitted to guide him gradually to that which alone was good. Meanwhile however he continued vigorously prosecuting his studies, his mother being desirous that Gregory should follow the destination proposed for him by his father, and devote himself to oratory, and the legal profession. There was every prospect of his eminent success as an orator, but Gregory had little or no inclination for the profession, and the inconsistency which he began to perceive between the precepts and the actions of the heathen philosophers, disgusted him more and more with their

schools. However, he continued an industrious student, together with his brother Athenodorus, studying the Latin language, and at the persuasions of his master, he also gave considerable attention to the Roman laws, which he was assured would prove a valuable acquisition to him, whatever might be the subsequent course of his life. Gregory found this study far from easy, but in compliance with the wishes of his master, he prosecuted it diligently.

The removal of the brothers from their native city was decided by the marriage of their sister to a lawyer, who received an appointment under the governor of Palestine, and who, shortly after going thither, summoned his wife to join him. She found no great difficulty in inducing her brothers to accompany her on the journey to Berytus in Phœnicia, the place of her destination, where was a celebrated university, which held out strong temptations to both Gregory and Athenodorus. They did not however remain long at Berytus, but removed to Cæsarea, a change of abode fraught with most important results to the brothers, for there it was that they fell in with Origen, who, as we have seen, left Alexandria, and took up his abode at Cæsarea, about the year 231, in consequence of the unkind treatment he received at the hands of the Bishop Demetrius. The first time that Gregory met

Origen, he who was so practised in the study of character and intellect, decided that the young man before him was superior to the common run of men in both, and accordingly he exerted himself to lead Gregory to devote himself to the study of Christian philosophy. At first the young man had no inclination to do so, but won by the exceeding earnestness and attractive manners of Origen, as well as by his forcible arguments, Gregory abandoned all his original intentions, and devoted himself to that philosophy which Origen taught, and to the practice of virtue.

The great master was well aware that he had no ordinary pupil to deal with—he began by obtaining an intimate acquaintance with his inmost mind, examining him, conversing with him, and fathoming all the depths of his intellect, in order to know what to repress and what to cultivate, noting that at this time the impetuosity of his mind needed a strict and judicious curb, which was wisely and lightly handled by Origen, who had entirely gained the affection both of Gregory and his brother and fellow-pupil, Athenodorus. Having thus prepared the way for his instructions, Origen began a course of philosophy with the young men, teaching them logic in order to exercise their reasoning powers; physics, that they might not only admire the works of God by instinct, but by their own judgment;

astronomy, to raise their thoughts above this world ; geometry, in order that its clear and unalterable laws might strengthen them in accurate and fixed methods of reasoning ; ethics, and the general conduct of life ; all these various sciences blending into the one great aim, of leading their hearts to that knowledge which the world cannot give, the knowledge of God.¹ By means of these avenues of worldly science therefore, Origen conducted his pupils to the study of theology ; nor did he confine them to any particular school of writers on this subject, preferring to point out to them as they advanced, the errors and sophisms into which some had strayed, drawing from thence the lesson that unfailing truth comes only from God and His revealed Word. “ Thus whilst teaching him profane philosophy, insensibly Origen instilled into his pupil’s mind the light of the true Faith, so that whereas those studies often confirm men in paganism, they served as the road to lead S. Gregory to Christianity. For learning by this profound study, how faint was the light obtained by the greatest philosophers on the subject of the Divinity ; and seeing how little stability there was in the opinions which one or the other was ever ready to over-set, he heartily embraced the simplicity of the true Faith, owning that in matters so far

¹ Greg. Thaum. Panegy. ad Orig.

above human reasoning, we must submit to authority without seeking to comprehend all.”¹

The result of Origen’s instructions was, that both Gregory and Athenodorus resolved upon forsaking not only the world, and all its false pleasures, but also the attractions of literature, that they might give themselves wholly to the service of God.

Firmilian, already mentioned as the friend and admirer of Origen,² was also the friend of his two pupils; as might naturally be expected, he warmly encouraged them to persevere in their resolution, and Origen likewise rejoiced greatly to see such an abundant fruit following his labours; not forgetting that though he had sown and watered, God Himself had given the increase.

The persecution under the Emperor Maximin interrupted the happy union in which Origen and his pupils were living, and when the former fled from the city, Gregory also departed and went into Egypt, remaining some time a student at Alexandria, where he obtained a high reputation for the purity and strictness of his life. It is uncertain whether he received the Sacrament of Baptism

¹ Tillemont. Tome iv. 323.

² It has been supposed that Firmilian first led the brothers to put themselves under the guidance of Origen, whose worth he so well appreciated. See Tillemont. S. Greg. Thaum., Art. iii.

during his stay at Alexandria, or whether he was admitted into CHRIST's Church upon his return to Cæsarea, which took place as soon as Origen was able to return thither again. At the end of the year 238, S. Gregory and Athenodorus resolved upon going back to their own country; it may possibly have been that their mother was still living, and desired their presence;¹ or, as is more probable, that it was needful they should attend to the regulation of their worldly affairs, being, as we have seen, of a wealthy family. Before their departure, S. Gregory pronounced an eloquent oration before a large assembly, in which he acknowledged his infinite debt of gratitude to his beloved master, Origen, and lamented the necessity that he was under of leaving the scene of his happy studies for the cares and excitement of the world, to which he was returning, comparing his departure to Adam's banishment from Paradise, and to the captivity of the Jews.² Shortly afterwards Origen wrote a letter to him, addressing him as his "true son," and exhorting him to devote all the talents with which God had favored him, to the cause of Christianity, and to borrow from all science and philosophy what

¹ Socrat. Bk. iv. Chap. 27.

² This oration has been reckoned as one of the finest specimens of rhetoric amongst the ancients by Du Pin.

might forward that cause, even as the Israelites borrowed the jewels of the Egyptians, when they were journeying towards the promised land. His only sure trust, Origen further warned him to place in the Word of God and in prayer, reminding him that those who would have the door of Heaven opened to them, must not only *seek* but *knock*.

As soon as S. Gregory's return to Neo-cæsarea was known, the expectation became general that he would show forth the great acquirements, of which the fame had reached his native city; he was sought and courted on all sides, and the leading men intreated him to accept some post of authority, and devote himself to the improvement of the city. But S. Gregory desired nothing less than worldly eminence and admiration, and steadily refusing all these tempting offers, with a fixedness of purpose as rare as it was admirable, he relinquished all his possessions both of money and land, and retired to a solitary spot in the surrounding country, where he could undisturbed give himself up to prayer and meditation.

But whilst he was thus occupied with the care of his own soul, which care appeared to him sufficient to occupy one whose hope was in Heaven, he was singled out by others as competent to undertake the care of many thousand souls. Though he might forget the world, he was not "by the world

forgot," and Phædimus, Bishop of Amasea, the metropolitan of Pontus, selected him as peculiarly calculated to exercise the chief spiritual authority over Neo-cæsarea, rightly judging that his well-known piety and sound judgment more than compensated for his youth, S. Gregory not being as yet of the customary age for elevation to the Episcopate.¹

When, however, the young man so highly honored, heard of the Primate's intentions towards him, he earnestly desired to avoid the responsibilities of an office for which he judged himself unworthy, and accordingly he removed from one place of retirement to another, more as if he were escaping from the dangers of persecution than from an office of importance and dignity. At last, being unable to find S. Gregory, Phædimus solemnly, and in the Presence of God, Whose Omniscience was over them both, declared that he consecrated S. Gregory to the service of the Church, and hearing of this, the latter judged that he had no longer any right to refuse to obey the summons; he accordingly consented to receive his consecration, only requesting that he might be allowed a suitable time for preparation. This just request was of course acceded to, and for a short time longer the Bishop elect remained in his retirement,

¹ Euseb. Bk. vi. 30.

beseeking GOD to fit him to bear the weight of responsibility about to rest upon him.

It was during this time, when his spirit was purified by communion with GOD, that he received that celebrated Creed, or rule of Faith, which has been preserved as a precious legacy to the Church, ever since. S. Gregory was wrapt in profound meditation, when in a vision a venerable old man stood before him, accompanied by a woman, who addressing her companion as S. John the Evangelist, desired him to impart to S. Gregory the mysteries of the Faith. This instruction he immediately wrote down; it was to the following effect: "There is One GOD, the FATHER of the Living Word, and of the subsisting Wisdom and Power, and of Him Who is His Eternal Image, the perfect Begetter of Him that is perfect, the FATHER of the Only Begotten SON. There is One LORD, the only SON of the only FATHER, GOD of GOD, the Character and Image of the Godhead, the powerful Word, the comprehensive Wisdom, by Which all things were made, and the Power that gave being to the whole creation, the true SON of the true FATHER, the Invisible of the Invisible, the Incorruptible of the Incorruptible, the Immortal of the Immortal, and the Eternal of Him that is Eternal. There is One HOLY GHOST, having Its subsistence of GOD, which appeared through the

SON to mankind, the perfect Image of the perfect SON, the Life giving Life, the holy Fountain, the Sanctity, and the Author of Sanctification, by Whom GOD the FATHER is made manifest, Who is over all, and in all; and GOD the SON, Who is through all. A perfect TRINITY, Which neither in glory, eternity, or dominion, is divided, or separated from Itself.”¹

It appears to have been in the year 240 that S. Gregory became Bishop of Neo-cæsarea. As he was journeying from the wilderness to the city, he and his companions were overtaken by darkness and by a violent storm. The only shelter near was a heathen temple, famous for its oracles, and into this place S. Gregory entered, passing the night in prayers and psalmody. The next morning, when after their departure the heathen priests began to celebrate the customary pagan rites, the oracle declared that its power was departed by reason of those that had lodged there the preceding night. The indignant heathen followed S. Gregory, who to show the power of GOD, in His Name summoned the demon to return, which order was obeyed,² and the priest was so struck with the Omnipotence of the One True GOD, that forsaking all his former ways, he became a convert,

¹ Cave's Life of S. Gregory, I. 402.

² Socrat. iv. 27.

and ultimately received holy orders from S. Gregory.

It is well to remember in connexion with this history, what a very remarkable degree of power God permitted to His servants in the early Church, over Satan and all unclean spirits. So frequently was it exercised, that exorcists were among the regular ecclesiastical officers, and received their appointment from the Bishop, and there were established forms of exorcism, consisting of prayers, and adjurations in the Name of CHRIST.¹ Throughout the writings of the Fathers we find constant allusion both to the power exercised by demons and evil spirits, and to the greater power granted to Christians for their control. S. Irenæus² speaks of the many possessed by devils and thus freed, and so does Justin Martyr in his Apology.³ Tertullian very frequently alludes to these demons, of whom he says: "Their work is the overthrow of man. . . . Much is permitted to the power of spirits, so that being unseen and unperceived, they appear rather in their effects than in their acts." And after describing some of these effects, both in oracles and otherwise, he continues: "Let some one be brought forward here at the foot of your judgment-seat, who is possessed of a demon. When

¹ Bingham, iii. 4, and xvi. 5.

² Epist. ii. 32.

³ Apol. ii. 6, 8.

commanded by any Christian to speak, that spirit shall as truly declare itself a demon, as elsewhere falsely a god.”¹ Again: “The power of demons and spirits that were made subject to us, yet sometimes mingle contumacy with their fear. . . . Therefore, when like rebels from the prisons, they break out against us, in whose power they are,” &c.² Again, when denying that military service was suitable to Christians, Tertullian asks: “Shall he defend by night those whom in the daytime he hath put to flight by his exorcism?”³ The same author relates the story of a woman possessed by a devil at the theatre, who being exorcised, declared that he had a right to her, having found her in his own place.⁴ S. Cyprian says that “the devil is scourged, and scorched, and tormented by the power of God, by the exorcists, through the voice of men.”⁵ And again, when speaking of a woman who being possessed by the devil, so that she pretended to be a prophetess; “Suddenly there appeared against her one of the exorcists, a man approved, and as to religious discipline, ever of good conversation . . . who arose against this wicked spirit to overcome him . . . and inspired by the Grace of God, boldly withstood him, and proved that he was a most

¹ Tertul. Apol. 22, 23.

² Tertul. Apol. 27.

³ De Coron. 11.

⁴ De Spect. 26.

⁵ Epist. lxi. 15.

wicked spirit, who had before been accounted holy.”¹ Again: “These, when adjured on our parts by the True God, at once submit, and make confession, and are forced to depart from the bodies they have possessed. You may see them by our voice, and through the operation of the Unseen Majesty, lashed with stripes, and scorched with fire . . . shrieking, groaning, intreating, confessing whence they came, and where they depart, even in the hearing of their own worshippers.”² So also S. Cyril: “The HOLY GHOST employs the tongue of one man for wisdom, the soul of another He enlightens by prophecy, to another He gives powers to drive away devils,” &c.³ And when speaking of the consecrated oil used in Holy Baptism, he says: “As the breathing of the saints, and the invocation of the Name of God, like fiercest flame, scorch and drive out evil spirits, so also this exorcised oil receives such virtue by the invocation of God and by prayer, as not only to burn and cleanse away all traces of sin, but also to chase away all the invisible powers of the evil one.”⁴

Socrates relates how Maruthas, Bishop of Mesopotamia, and Abdas, Bishop of Persia, after giving themselves to prayer and fasting, cast out a devil from the son of Isdigerdes, the King of Persia,

¹ Epist. lxxv. 10.

² S. Cyp. ad Donat. 4.

³ Catech. Lect. xvi. 12 and 22.

⁴ Ibid. xx. 3.

whose conversion was effected by the deed. He died, however, before he had openly professed Christianity.¹ Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely, but these suffice to prove, that at the period of which we are speaking, a power yet remained in the Church, similar to that of the Apostolic times,² and which we do not now possess.

¹ Socrat. vii. 8.

² S. Matt. x. 8 ; S. Mark iii. 15, and vi. 7 ; S. Luke ix. 1.

CHAPTER II.

“ The Saints of old are rather said,
To sleep with fathers than lie dead,
And e’er since evangelic day
Diffused its bright heaven-opening ray,
The Saints are said, when life they close,
In Dormitories to repose.

Death then, my soul, in memory keep,
And rest assured ’tis but a sleep.”

BISHOP KEN.

BEGINNING OF S. GREGORY’S EPISCOPAL CAREER.—THE
PESTILENCE.—INFLUENCE OF S. GREGORY.—HE APPOINTS
ALEXANDER BISHOP OF COMANA.—DECIAN PERSECUTION.
—S. GREGORY LEAVES NEO-CÆSAREA.—RETURNS ON THE
DEATH OF DECIUS.—HIS TREATMENT OF PENITENTS.—
THEIR DIVISION IN THE EARLY CHURCH.—PAUL OF
SAMOSATA.—HIS HERESY.—S. GREGORY ATTENDS THE
SYNOD OF ANTIOCH.—DEATH OF S. GREGORY.

S. GREGORY had no light burden to bear as Bishop of Neo-cæsarea—the city, which was large and populous, was sunk in vice and idolatrous superstition, so that upon inquiry, the new Bishop found it contained only seventeen Christians ! When he made his entry, the people thronged together to see one,

whose great reputation was increased by the recent event at the heathen temple. There being as yet no episcopal residence, many persons sought for the privilege of receiving him under their roofs; S. Gregory accordingly went to the house of Musonius, a member of his flock, and immediately entered upon his episcopal duties, preaching to the people on the very day of his arrival, with such force and power, that he reckoned sundry converts even from that day. Early the next morning, his doors were crowded with people of all ranks, sex, and age, some seeking spiritual, some temporal relief, both of which his LORD was pleased to impart to them through the hands of His servant, so that whilst evil spirits were banished from the possessed, the diseased in mind began likewise to be freed from the thralldom of superstition and idolatry, in which the originator of all evil had held them. Before long S. Gregory had gathered around him a flock of believers, and his next step was to supply them with a Church, worthy to be dedicated to Him Whose worship was to be celebrated therein. All his people joined with their Bishop in this good work—some contributing funds, others labour, according to their capability. The church was erected in the principal quarter of the town, and still remained uninjured in the time of S. Gregory Nyssen, although the principal part of the town had been

destroyed by an earthquake about the year 344, and yet more imminent danger beset all Christian edifices in the reign of Dioclesian, who commanded their universal destruction.

S. Gregory was aided in his work of conversion by a violent pestilence which ravaged the city, and which was probably a fore-runner of that fearful plague, which somewhat later devastated the whole Roman empire. The circumstances connected with the commencement of this pestilence greatly increased the rapidly spreading influence of the Christian Bishop. It was on a great festival day, when games in honor of a heathen deity were celebrated in the theatre; vast numbers of the people came flocking in from the neighbouring country, till the crowd became so vast that all attempts to commence the customary solemnities, or the games, were hopeless, and amidst the general confusion cries on all sides arose to Jupiter, that he would come to their aid, and make them room. The cries were heard by S. Gregory, who observed that their prayer would be granted, and room would indeed be made amongst them. These words being remembered when almost immediately afterwards the pestilence broke out, the feeling became very prevalent that it was a visitation from the God of the Christians, and the Bishop received many intreaties that he would intercede with the Great and Al-

mighty God, that He would remove His scourge from off them. How fearful a scourge it was we learn from S. Gregory Nyssen, who says that a few moments' sickness often ended in death, that the temples became as one large tomb, and that the streams and fountains were choked with the corpses of those who had crept there, vainly seeking alleviation for their agonies.¹ When this fearful plague ceased, many turned to Christianity, being convinced of the nothingness of the heathen gods, whose aid they had vainly invoked in their hour of need.

The wisdom and piety of S. Gregory attracted multitudes to him, and amongst the citizens of Neo-cæsarea he was the universal judge and reference in all cases of perplexity, not only in matters spiritual, but temporal also. In illustration of this his biographer tells a story concerning two brothers, who disputed the possession of a large piece of water included in their patrimonial inheritance. The interference of the Bishop did not succeed in appeasing the quarrel, and there was every prospect of violence and bloodshed, but S. Gregory went to the spot, and remained there in fervent prayer that God would avert this sin from His people's heads, and it pleased God to turn the lake into dry land, which admitted of an equitable par-

¹ Vit. Greg. Thaum. p. 575.

tition.¹ Many such narratives are related concerning the Saint, proving the great veneration in which he was held by his people, and the acceptableness of his prayers in the Sight of God, Who deigned to avert evil from His children, as He had done of olden time, in answer to the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man.² Thus in one case when the river Lycus, swollen with violent rains, came down from the mountains of Armenia, threatening destruction, God in answer to the saint's prayers checked its proud waters, that they should not overflow.

The city of Comana, which was not far distant from Neo-cæsarea, desired to have a spiritual ruler to keep guard over the infant Church established there, and they requested S. Gregory to come and assist them in founding an episcopate. On his arrival several men eminent in the city for their birth, their eloquence, or similar gifts, were proposed for the prelacy, but S. Gregory told them that such endowments, though valuable in themselves, were not sufficient, that holiness and faithfulness were more essential for a Bishop. Apparently in mockery some one remarked that in such case Alexander the collier had better be elected

¹ Vit. Greg. Thaum. p. 554.

² Gen. xviii. Ex. viii. 13, 31; ix. 33, &c.; xxxii. Num. xii. 13.

Bishop. S. Gregory inquired to whom they alluded, and on an interview with Alexander, found him to be a most holy minded man, who, though wealthy and of high birth, had forsaken the world, that by leading a humble austere life, he might mortify the flesh and grow in the graces of the Spirit. Satisfied that no fitter Bishop could be chosen, S. Gregory appointed him, and his actions justified the selection. He subsequently died a martyr's death amidst the flames.¹ As S. Gregory was returning from Comana, he met two Jews, who agreed to practise a fraud on him, in order to obtain some relief. One accordingly lay down on the ground pretending to be dead, whilst the other with bitter lamentations besought the Bishop, whose charity was so well known, to give something for his burial. S. Gregory gave his mantle, casting it upon the supposed corpse, and pursued his journey, but as soon as the impostor called upon his companion to arise, congratulating him on the success of their deception, he discovered that the man was really dead, and that the Bishop's mantle truly covered a corpse.² S. Basil describes the holy Bishop as most apostolic in his whole demeanour, the internal Grace

¹ Tillemont, tome iv. 332.

² A story similar to this is told of S. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, by Sozomen, who alludes to this circumstance as having occurred to S. Gregory. Bk. vii. chap. 27.

of God, which filled him, shining forth in his countenance, as in every word and action, and making him all charity and loving kindness. He was never seen to give way to the impulses of anger; always calm and temperate, no hasty or proud expressions ever passed his lips, his language was singularly simple and straightforward, and his humility was as remarkable as his merit. Happy the people under such a rule! But they were to be deprived of their blessing ere long. The Decian persecution, (A.D. 249,) the terrible effects of which we have already seen, fell not less heavily upon Pontus and Cappadocia, than upon other parts of the Christian world. Confusion and perplexity prevailed, every one was ready to inform against the Christians, and no one could ever feel secure for a day. Under these circumstances S. Gregory counselled his flock rather to shun the storm which they were unable to resist, than to expose themselves to perils which their yet untried faith might not be bold enough to endure. The chief pastor of every Church being always the prominent object of heathen rage, S. Gregory himself retired to the desert, there to abide till the fury of the persecution had abated. His only companion in his retreat was the priest who from serving the heathen oracle had turned to the Living God. Information however was obtained as to the place of their retire-

ment, and a party of soldiers went in search of them; surrounding the spot where the Bishop was concealed. He and his attendant saw the persecutors on all sides, but they remained in firm silent prayer, and the enemy after vainly seeking their prey took their departure. When the person who had given information concerning them heard of the failure of the undertaking, he described the exact spot where S. Gregory was concealed, but the soldiers said that nothing was to be seen there except two trees. He however repaired to the place himself, where finding the Bishop and his companion kneeling in prayer, he became convinced that God Himself had specially protected them, and falling down at S. Gregory's feet, he besought him to teach him in the true faith, and to admit him as a disciple and follower.

When at last the persecution abated (A.D. 251) S. Gregory hastened to return to his post, and as far as in him lay, to remedy the evils done. In order to strengthen the faith of the survivors, by reminding them of the courage and the consequent glorious recompense of the holy martyrs who had gone from them, he established several anniversary festivals in memory of them, an edifying practice which has been observed in the Church from the apostolic times to the present day.¹

¹ S. Cyprian writes from his exile, "Mark the days on

The lamentable state of the Roman empire at this time affected of necessity all parts of the Christian world; and amongst them, Pontus suffered severely from the incursions of the Goths and Scythians, who coming down upon it like a torrent, carried the people captive, and brought outrage and destruction in their train. In the general excitement and confusion, some amongst those who were professing Christians, followed the example of the barbarians, and also pillaged those who were weaker than themselves. Being appealed to by one of the Bishops of Pontus as to the proper penitential discipline of such offenders, S. Gregory wrote in reply a canonical epistle, which has always been held as a high authority in matters of this nature, and from which we also derive much information concerning the treatment adopted by the early Church towards penitents. They were divided into four classes. First, the *flentes*, or mourners, who remained without the gate of the Church, asking the

which they (the Decian martyrs) depart, that we may celebrate their memories among the commemorations of the martyrs: although indeed Tertullus . . . acquaints me with the days on which our blessed brethren in prison pass by the way of a glorious death to immortality; and oblations and sacrifices in commemoration of them are here celebrated by us, which, the LORD protecting, we shall soon celebrate with you."—Epist. xii. 2.

prayers of the faithful, as they passed, and intreating to be admitted to that penance, which should lead to their final restoration. When this petition was granted and they were allowed to enter upon a penitential course, they were called *audientes*, or hearers. Their place was then in the narthex—the lowest part of the Church, and though they might listen to the sermon and to the reading of Holy Scriptures, they were dismissed before the prayers began. The length of this deprivation depended entirely upon the nature of their offences, but in no case was it considered that a hasty crude repentance was sufficient, and the term of humiliation and banishment was generally measured not by days or weeks, but by years.

When the appointed time had been passed amongst this class, the penitents were permitted to join the *Genuflectentes* or *Substrati*, who might advance near to the Ambo, whence the prayers were read, and might join in certain of them which were especially offered in behalf of themselves. These penitents were clothed in sackcloth, and frequently were sprinkled with ashes, especially on Ash Wednesday, on which day they all came before the Bishop, barefooted, and with all external marks of humiliation, conducted by their Priests, who had already appointed for them such penitential observances as each individual case required. On

this occasion the Bishop weeping and mourning over their sins prostrated himself with them, and after praying for them, dismissed them.¹

So long as this appointed discipline lasted, the penitents were withheld from the more joyful parts of the public services, and they were enjoined in private to give themselves to works of almsgiving, fasting, and abstinence from all the pleasures of the world, even such as at other times were lawful. Thus S. Pacian says, addressing penitents, that it is their part "to weep in sight of the Church, to mourn their lost life in sordid garb, to fast, to pray, to fall prostrate, to refuse luxury,

¹ Sozomen, Bk. vii. 16. "It (the public penance) is observed with great rigour by the Western Churches, particularly at Rome, where there is a place appropriated to the reception of penitents, where they stand and mourn until the completion of the solemn services, from which they are excluded; then they cast themselves with groans and lamentations prostrate on the ground. The Bishop conducts the ceremony, sheds tears, and prostrates himself in like manner, and all the people burst into tears, and groan aloud. Afterwards the Bishop rises from the ground, and raises up the others; he offers up prayer on behalf of the penitents, and then dismisses them. Each of the penitents subjects himself in private to voluntary sufferings, either by fastings, by abstaining from the bath, or from divers kinds of meats, until a certain time appointed by the Bishop. When this time arrives, he is made free from the consequences of his sin, and is permitted to resume his place in the assemblies of the Church."

if one invite to the bath, if one bid to a feast, to say, 'These things for the happy. I have sinned against the LORD, and am in danger of perishing eternally. What have I to do with feastings who have injured the LORD?' and beside this to hold the poor man by the hand, to intreat the prayers of widows, to fall down before the Priests, to ask the intreaties of the interceding Church, to essay all sooner than perish."¹ In this third stage of penitence, those who had been guilty of great sins were frequently kept for ten, fifteen, or twenty years; in cases of deadly sin, there was often no limit save death itself;² and even then, should the sick man recover, the absolution which he had received when apparently dying, was not held to exempt him from continuing the penance that he would otherwise have undergone. Some fearful cases indeed there were, in which with a severe justice, though with a mourning and bleeding heart, the Church was constrained to refuse reconciliation to her sons, even on their death-beds. "They who do not repent nor testify sorrow for their sins with all their heart, and with open profession of their grief, are to be altogether forbidden the hope of communion and peace, if in sickness and peril they begin to intreat for it, because not repentance for sin, but the warning

¹ Par. ad Pæn. 19.

² Bingham. Bk. xviii. 4.

of impending death compels them to ask ; nor does he deserve to receive solace in death, who has not thought that he should die.”¹

The fourth order amongst the penitents was the Consistentes or bystanders, who were permitted to remain during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, though they could not themselves partake of it. This was the final stage immediately preceding reconciliation and restoration to communion. The Bishops had power to shorten or mitigate the term of penance, if they saw fit cause in the humility and sincerity of the penitent, who finally received absolution, together with the imposition of hands, either public or private, according to circumstances. When possible Holy Thursday was preferred as the day for this solemn service ;² it might be administered by either Bishop or Priest ; but of course the chief Pastor’s ministry, when attainable, was preferred.

To return to the personal history of S. Gregory, concerning which, however, we have few remaining details. The only occasion in which we find him again taking a part in the public affairs of the Church, was in a grand synod assembled at Antioch in the year 264, to examine into the heretical doctrines held by Paul of Samosata, then Bishop of Antioch. He was a man of corrupt and profligate

¹ S. Cyp. Epist. lv. 19. .

² Bingh. xix. 2.

life, habitually violating not only the rules incumbent upon a Bishop or Priest, but those becoming a Christian. Although he had no patrimonial inheritance, nor had exercised any lucrative trade or art, (and certainly the Bishop's throne was not a place for the accumulation of wealth,) Paul amassed an immense fortune, by unjust and sacrilegious means, extorting money from the faithful, buying and selling those sacred things which come from the Grace of God alone. His harshness and pride were no less disgraceful in a follower of the Meek and Lowly CHRIST.¹ Corrupt and dangerous as his practices were, his doctrinal errors equalled them. He denied the Ever Blessed Trinity in Unity, making out that the Second and Third Persons had no real existence, but were only spiritual emanations, as man's reason proceeds from his soul, but is not another soul; and though he granted that the LORD JESUS CHRIST had been born of the Virgin Mary, he denied the veritable doctrine of the Incarnation, saying that the Word had descended into Him after His Birth, therefore that His human Form was only Holy and Divine, in so far as this Spirit was infused into it.

Alarmed at the appearance of such rank heresies in one holding rule over a part of the Church, a synod was convened to take measures concerning one who

¹ Euseb. Bk. vii. 30.

was "committing such depredations in the flock of CHRIST."¹ There was a very large attendance, amongst whom was Firmilian, Bishop of Cappadocia; Helenus, Bishop of Tarsus; Nicomes, Bishop of Iconium; Hymenæus, Bishop of Jerusalem; Theotecnus, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Palestine; Maximus, Bishop of Bostra; Athenodorus, who held a See in Pontus; and S. Gregory Thaumaturgus.² These, with many others, most unequivocally condemned the errors of the false pastor, who craftily feigned to deny them, and proved himself ready, by any fraud and moral degradation, to preserve his See. For a time the treacherous Paul averted his just judgment, but subsequently, in the year 270, he was excommunicated by another council (comprising many of those who had before met on the same subject, although S. Gregory and Firmilian of Cappadocia were dead), and Domnus was appointed in his stead.³ Eusebius quotes the synodical epistle, announcing this termination to the controversy.

It was probably but a short time before this final council that S. Gregory was taken to his rest; the day was the 17th of November, but the precise year we do not know. Feeling the approach of death, he arranged and regulated the affairs of his

¹ Euseb. Bk. vii. 27.

² Ibid. 28.

³ Euseb. Bk. vii. 30; Theodoret, Bk. i. 4.

diocese; and hearing that it now contained only seventeen heathens, he raised his eyes to heaven, and said, that although he had ardently desired to leave none but Christians behind him, yet he thanked God heartily for His goodness in permitting him to leave to his successor only the same number of heathen as he himself had found of Christians on coming to his charge. He earnestly requested that no pompous funeral ceremonies might be performed over him, for that having all his lifetime been but a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, he would not have his lifeless body otherwise regarded; and after offering up a fervent prayer that God would bring to Himself the wanderers, and confirm His own children in their Faith, the venerable saint calmly and peaceably yielded up his spirit to the God Who gave it. The pilgrimage was ended, the stranger had found his home, the orphan his FATHER; as the Prophet had foretold, "The righteous shall enter into peace."¹

The Roman and Greek Churches commemorate S. Gregory Thaumaturgus on November 17th. His diocese of Neo-cæsarea afterwards became an Archiepiscopal See.

¹ Isa. lvii. 2.

S. DIONYSIUS.

BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA AND CONFESSOR.

“ Though thy sweet eloquent spirit knew no chains
 In thought's o'erflowing store,
Lost are thy letter'd toils, scarce aught remains,
 Lost on oblivion's shore !
Yet not all lost ; but laid upon His Breast
 In Whom they have their origin and end.
Part He conceals, and part makes manifest,
 Each as may best to His good purpose tend.
It matters not,—for we must soon be gone,
And things of earth most cherished, are like hues
 Of sunset, fading from us one by one,
Though heavenly rays a passing grace infuse ;
Till ours and our own selves we in His Being lose.”

The Cathedral.

LIFE OF S. DIONYSIUS.

“ True is, that whilome that good poet sayd,
The gentle minde by gentle deeds is knowne ;
For a man by nothing is so well bewrayd
As by his manners, in which plaine is showne,
Of what degree and what race he is growne.”

Faerie Queene, vi. 3.

WORLDLY POSITION OF S. DIONYSIUS.—HIS CONVERSION.—
BECOMES A PUPIL OF ORIGEN.—SUCCEEDS HERACLES AS
HEAD OF THE CATECHETICAL SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA.—
APPOINTED BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.—PERSECUTIONS IN
ALEXANDRIA BEFORE AND UNDER DECIUS.—THE MAR-
TYRS.—S. DIONYSIUS IS WARNED BY GOD TO DEPART.—
TAKEN BY THE SOLDIERS, AND LIBERATED BY THE
PEOPLE.—HE RETIRES TO LIBYA.—RETURNS TO ALEX-
ANDRIA.—WRITES TO NOVATIAN.—TREATMENT OF THE
LAPSED.—SERAPION.—BAPTISM OF HERETICS.—GALLUS.
—VALERIAN.—S. DIONYSIUS IS SEIZED.—HIS TRIAL AND
BANISHMENT.—RETURN TO ALEXANDRIA UNDER GAL-
LIENUS.—SEDITION AND CIVIL WAR IN THE CITY.—THE
PESTILENCE.—CHARITY OF THE CHRISTIANS.—MILLENNA-
RIAN HERESY.—DEFEATED BY S. DIONYSIUS.—SABELLIAN
HERESY.—OPPOSED BY S. DIONYSIUS.—HE IS ACCUSED
OF THE OPPOSITE EXTREME.—HIS DEFENCE.—PAUL OF
SAMOSATA.—DEATH OF S. DIONYSIUS.

ANOTHER disciple of the great master Origen,
claims our attention ; one who has been pronounced
worthy of the position he held as the successor of

S. Mark, and the predecessor of S. Athanasius ; for such S. Dionysius was, being Bishop of Alexandria. Dionysius was the son of noble and wealthy parents, natives of Saba, in Arabia Felix ; he was, however, educated at Alexandria, the chief seat of learning, both in Christian and Pagan philosophy. Possessed of great talent, fostered by these advantages of education, Dionysius advanced rapidly in the acquisition of all the prizes held out by the world to tempt its votaries. Pomp and honor, esteem and dignity, were all enjoyed by him ; but one thing was yet wanting to him, and that was the knowledge of the unprofitableness of all these things, when the hour should come in which, laying them all aside, he must go down into the grave, and, unless accompanied by Him Who never refused a sinner's fervent cry for help, must pass alone, in fear and trembling, through the appalling terrors of the valley of the shadow of death.

It was by the instrumentality of his love for general learning, that Dionysius was led to seek the knowledge of salvation. In the course of his extensive and promiscuous reading, the epistles of S. Paul came under his attention ; and he arose from their study with new thoughts, new hopes, new aims. The Grace of God opened to him the great mystery of godliness ; and believing with his heart, Dionysius prepared to make confession of

the faith with his mouth. Having received the rite of holy Baptism from Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, he immediately forsook all the great things of the world, which had before charmed him, resigning his dignities, and shrinking from notice and observation, (not through cowardice, but from humility.) He gave himself up to an evangelical life, and placed himself under the instruction of Origen, then head of the Alexandrian catechetical school. Dionysius continued to extend his already large stores of learning, even studying the corrupt writings of heretics; "defiling my mind," he says, "for a little, with their execrable sentiments: but I have also derived this benefit from them,—i. e., to refute them in my own mind, and to feel the greater disgust at them." One of the Priests under whose lawful authority S. Dionysius was placed, was alarmed lest his faith should be unsettled, or his purity of mind corrupted by this "sink of iniquity," and accordingly remonstrated with Dionysius concerning the practice, who was ready to yield, believing the apprehension to be justified; but he was directed by a special Divine vision, in which a voice said to him, "Read all that cometh to thy hand, for thou art capable of proving and judging thereof, and by this means wert thou first brought to the knowledge of CHRIST."¹

¹ Epist. ad Phil. in Euseb. vii. 7.

We have already seen how Origen was constrained to leave his post at Alexandria, in which he was succeeded by his pupil and assistant Heraclas, who, on the death of Demetrius, A.D. 231, was elevated to the episcopacy of that important city. Dionysius had before this time received Priest's orders, and he was now appointed to fill the office of head of the catechetical schools, vacated by Heraclas. The new Prelate likewise appointed him to be his vicar-general.¹ No particulars have reached us of S. Dionysius' life whilst he held this important office; but the best encomium upon his exemplary fulfilment of all its duties was, that when the See of Alexandria was next vacant, by the death of Heraclas, Dionysius was selected as the person most qualified to govern the Church; and accordingly, about the year 248, he was consecrated Bishop of Alexandria,²—the same year in which S. Cyprian became Primate of Carthage.

The peace which the Christians enjoyed at that time under the Emperor Philip, was shortly to be disturbed under his successor; but even before Decius let loose the floods of persecution upon CHRIST'S people throughout his empire, those established at Alexandria had tasted of the sword and flame. A heathen poet, or fortune-teller, having greatly excited the people against the

¹ Tillemont, S. Denys. Art. i.

² Euseb. vi. 35.

Christians, and wrought them up into a maddened fury, seized the opportunity of venting his own rage upon them, and led the heathen population into all manner of brutal excesses; so that, frantic with excitement, no horrors seemed too great to satisfy their fevered passions, and they thought the blood of the Christians the only grateful propitiatory offering to their deities. Both men and women were seized, barbarously tortured, and put to death by stoning, or the flames. S. Dionysius relates the sufferings of Metra, an aged Christian, of Quinta and Apollonia, women, (the latter of whom is commemorated by the Church of Rome on February 9th,) and of Serapion.¹ The houses of all believers were broken open, and pillaged of all that was valuable; whilst less tempting property, or that which was difficult to move, was burnt in the streets. Whoever was met by the infuriated multitude was instantly arrested, and if he refused to offer their impious homage to the heathen gods, no other uncertainty remained to him than whether he should die by the stake, or by stoning.*

As might be expected in a time of such general licence, sedition and rebellion sprang up,² and the Christians had some slight rest, whilst the heathen persecutors turned upon one another the rage hitherto concentrated on the faithful: but almost

¹ Epist. ad Fab. Euseb. vi. 41.

² Ibid.

immediately the persecution arose again, and with less hope of a speedy termination, proceeding as it did from the imperial mandate. Alarm and consternation were universal; some fled to the mountains and deserts, where death awaited them in many shapes,—by starvation, by cold, by robbers, and by wild beasts; and, worst of all, many were seized and carried off as slaves by bands of predatory Arabs and Saracens.¹

Some of those who remained in the city yielded immediately to the popular cry, hoping thereby to save their property, and retain their offices; others did not present themselves to do sacrifice, but permitted their friends to conduct them to the judgment-seat, and thus sacrificed their conscience to their temporal welfare; some with the most blasphemous effrontery denying the LORD, and professing never to have been Christians; others, “pale and trembling, as if they were not to sacrifice, but themselves to be the victims and sacrifices to the idols, . . . obviously equally afraid to die and to offer the sacrifice.”² These were mocked and insulted even by the heathen mob, who could admire courage, though in the objects of their rage it kindled no pity in their hearts. Some who at first were firm, gave way after a few days’ imprisonment, without bearing any tortures, and others

¹ Euseb. vi. 42.

² Euseb. vi. 41.

were overcome in the course of their agonies ; but many “ firm and blessed pillars of the LORD, confirmed by the LORD Himself, and receiving in themselves strength and power suited and proportioned to their faith, became admirable witnesses of His Kingdom.”¹ Amongst these true and faithful servants, who were admitted by martyrdom into the joy of their LORD, were Julian and Eunus, the sight of whose constancy converted one Basas, a soldier, who endeavouring to shield the martyrs from the insults of the people, drew their execrations upon himself, and after a brave conflict, shared the martyr’s triumph. The heathen governor was indignant at finding himself withstood and defied by women, till at last he hurried many to execution, without preliminary torture. Dionysia, one of these female martyrs, is especially mentioned as being the mother of many children, but she “ did not love them more than the LORD.”²

Through these fearful and perilous times, it pleased God to preserve the life of S. Dionysius, which was so valuable to His Church and people. On the first reception of the imperial decree, Sabinus, the Prefect, sent an officer to seize the Christian Bishop, who remained quietly in his own house, expecting each moment to be taken prisoner. This however was the last place where the perse-

¹ Epist. ad Fab. Euseb. vi. 41.

² Ibid.

cutors thought of seeking for him, never imagining for one moment that S. Dionysius would expose himself to the danger of being captured; they therefore sought every place where it was thought possible for him to be concealed, but in vain. At the end of four days the Bishop was warned of GOD that he should leave his house, which he accordingly did, accompanied by some of his domestics, and several of the brethren, not voluntarily, as he expressly affirms, but in obedience to the Will of GOD.¹ He was in a short time taken by the imperial soldiers, and conducted to Taposiris, a little town between Alexandria and Canopus.² Meanwhile, one of his family, named Timotheus, who had been absent when the Bishop departed, returned home, and finding the house deserted, and guarded by soldiers, he fled in great alarm, and told the tale to a number of the country people who were assembled at a wedding feast. They with one accord made an attack upon the company of soldiers who were guarding the captive Bishop, put them to flight, forcibly and without heeding his intreaties liberating S. Dionysius, together with four of his companions, Paul, Faustus, Caius, and Peter.³ With the two last the Bishop retired into a desert, situated in the province of Marma-

¹ Epist. ad Ger. Euseb. vi. 40.

² Cave, i. 421.

³ Ad Ger.

rica, in Libya, where he remained until the cessation of the troublous reign of Decius, watching, notwithstanding, over the welfare of his people, amongst whom those priests who remained in Alexandria ministered devotedly, affording the consolation of their presence to the imprisoned brethren at the risk of their own lives, and after martyrdom performing for their lifeless bodies that duty always so highly esteemed by the pious, of giving them Christian burial. Two of the most eminent of the Alexandrian priests, Aquila and Faustinus, like their chief, sought refuge in Egypt, the latter survived until the persecution under Diocletian, when he was beheaded.¹

When the death of Decius arrested the desolating storm of persecution, S. Dionysius immediately returned to Alexandria, where he found full occupation in examining into the cases of the numerous lapsed and penitents, and restoring order in the Church. The Novatian heresy was by this time disturbing the peace of CHRIST's flock, and S. Dionysius received letters and statements alike from the orthodox Bishop of Rome, Cornelius, and from the schismatic pretender, Novatian. To the latter the Bishop of Alexandria replied in a short epistle, most characteristic of firmness and charity combined: "Dionysius sends greeting to Novatian.

¹ Tillemont, iv. 249.

If, as you say, you were forced against your will,¹ you will show it by retiring voluntarily. For it was your duty to suffer all things rather than to wound the Church of God. To die in defence of its unity, would be as glorious as laying down one's life rather than sacrifice to idols, and in my opinion, it would have been a greater glory; for in the one case the individual gives a testimony for his own soul, but in the other he bears witness for the whole Church. And now, if thou persuade or constrain the brethren to return to unanimity, thine uprightness will be greater than thy delusion, and the latter will not be laid to thy charge, but the other will be applauded; but if thou art unable to prevail with thy friends, save thine own soul. With the hope that thou art desirous of peace in the LORD, I bid thee farewell."²

S. Dionysius also wrote to the Bishop Cornelius, and to certain of the Roman confessors, who were tainted with the Novatian heresy.³ He himself took a decided and Catholic line with respect to the treatment of penitents, neither granting them a false peace and cruel mercy, on the one hand, nor on the other refusing all restoration and hope to those who had incurred the guilt of denying their Master.

¹ To be illegally consecrated.

² Epist. ad Novat. Euseb. vi. 45.

³ Euseb. vi. 46.

“The martyrs who are now sitting with CHRIST,” he wrote, “and are the sharers in His Kingdom, and the partners in His Judgment, and who are now judging with Him, received those of the brethren that fell away, and had been convicted of sacrificing to idols, when they saw their conversion and repentance, and that it might be acceptable to Him Who doth not by any means wish the death of sinners so much as their repentance; having proved them, they received and assembled with them. They also communicated with them in prayer and at their feasts. What then should we do? Let us join in our sentiments with them, and let us observe their judgment and their charity; and let us kindly receive those who were treated with such compassion by them.”¹ S. Dionysius wrote various epistles upon the subject of repentance and the treatment of penitents to different prelates; he was likewise summoned by Helenus, Bishop of Tarsus, in Cilicia, to a council called at Antioch to pronounce judgment against the Novatian heresy.² In one of his epistles S. Dionysius gives the following narration as an example of the earnestness with which he wished to withhold from none who sincerely desired it, restoration to the Church.

An aged Christian, Serapion by name, had stained the purity of his past life by offering heathen sacri-

¹ Ad Fab. Euseb. vi. 42.

² Euseb. vi. 46.

fice in the late persecution, and hitherto his intreaties for reconciliation had not been granted. Becoming dangerously ill, he lay insensible during three days, at the end of which recovering his senses, he desired his grandchild to hasten and fetch one of the priests to give him absolution, and bid his disquieted spirit depart in peace. The priest however was incapable of going to the dying man, being himself sick, but as a last expedient, S. Dionysius gave to the boy a piece of the consecrated bread, desiring him to give it to his grandfather. As the boy entered, Serapion said, "Thou art returned, my son, but the priest could not come. Do thou quickly that thou art commanded to do, and dismiss me." His grandson obeyed, and almost immediately after the old man died.¹

S. Dionysius was also engaged in the controversy concerning the baptism of heretics, in which S. Cyprian took so considerable a part. The Bishop of Alexandria agreed in the opinion held by his illustrious cotemporary on this subject, but he was extremely moderate in all that he said and did in the matter, striving as far as lay in his power to keep a charitable and forbearing spirit amongst the controversialists. He drew a distinction between such persons as had only received baptism from the hands of heretics, which he pronounced wholly ineffi-

¹ Epist. ad Fab. Euseb. vi. 44.

cacious, and such as after having been baptized into the Catholic Church, apostatised and fell away ; concerning these he says, he had learnt from "our father, the blessed Heraclas, that if they frequented some one of those who taught strange doctrines, after they had been expelled from the Church, they were not to be admitted again, though they intreated much, until they had publicly declared all that they had heard from the adversaries, and then indeed he admitted them to communion, without deeming another baptism necessary for them."¹ The gentleness and charity of S. Dionysius's character is strongly displayed in writing on this subject, when he says, "to overturn their determinations (the council's) and to drive them into contention and strife, I cannot endure, for it is written, Thou shalt not remove the landmarks which thy fathers placed."² Writing to Sixtus, Bishop of Rome, S. Dionysius consults him on a point concerning this subject. One of the brethren who had long been a member of the congregation, even prior to the consecration of Heraclas, being present at the administration of Holy Baptism, was exceedingly struck with the rite, having himself not received it after the Catholic custom. He accordingly threw himself at the Bishop's feet with tears and lamentations, beseeching that he might even then be baptized anew. But S. Dionysius replied

¹ Epist. ad Phil. Euseb. vii. 7.

² Ibid.

that he could not feel justified in re-baptizing one who had so long been a communicant, "for one who had been in the habit of hearing thanksgiving, and repeating the Amen, and coming to the table, and extending his hand to receive the sacred elements, and after receiving and becoming a partaker of the Body and Blood of our LORD and SAVIOUR CHRIST for a long time, I would not dare to renew again any further. I exhorted him therefore, to take courage, and with a firm faith and good conscience to approach and take part with the Saints in the solemnity of the holy Supper."¹

The reign of Gallus was hardly more favorable to the Christians, than that of his predecessor Decius. "He did not understand the wickedness of Decius," says S. Dionysius, "nor did he foresee what it was that had destroyed him, but he stumbled at the same stone lying before his eyes. For when his reign was advancing prosperously, and his affairs succeeding according to his wishes, he persecuted those holy men, who interceded with GOD both for his peace and safety. Hence he persecuted the very prayers that were offered up in his behalf."² But yet harder times were to come under Valerian, whom S. Dionysius regarded as the beast spoken of in the Revelation, to whom was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy, and power was

¹ Ad Sixt. Euseb. vii. 9. ² Epist. ad Herm. Euseb. vii. 1.

given him to continue forty-two months.¹ At first hopes were raised by the favor shown to the Christians by the emperor, but he was persuaded by Macrianus, one of the chief Egyptian magicians, to turn his attention to the dark and horrid mysteries of magical incantations, and to persecute the Christians as their greatest enemies. This persecution began A.D. 257, and Æmilianus, prefect of Egypt, caused S. Dionysius, accompanied by Maximus, a priest, three deacons, and a Roman Christian, to be brought before him. He did not as was customary begin by inquiring into their public assemblies, and prohibiting them, but required the prisoners to abandon their profession of Christianity, in the hope that their example would influence others less conspicuous.

S. Dionysius gave a short answer, "We must obey God rather than man;" adding that he never could cease to worship the One True God, and Him only. The Prefect set before them the imperial clemency offered to those who would return to the usual order of things, and worship the heathen deities. The Bishop replied, "All the gods are not worshipped by all alike, but each man worships those whom he thinks to be gods. We, therefore, worship the One God and Creator of all things, and the very Same that has committed the govern-

¹ Epist. ad Herm. Euseb. vii. c. 10.

ment to their most excellent and sacred majesties, Valerian and Gallienus. Him we worship and adore, and to Him we incessantly pray that their reign may continue firm and unshaken."

"Who prevents you," asked Æmilianus, "from worshipping this One God, if He be a God, together with those that are the natural gods? For you are commanded to worship the gods, which all know to be such."

But S. Dionysius answered, "We can worship no other save Him only."

Then finding it useless to persevere, the Prefect called them an ungrateful and senseless people, and proceeded to sentence them to banishment; telling them that no assemblies in their cemeteries or elsewhere would be permitted, and that they must instantly depart to their appointed place of exile.¹ S. Dionysius was at this time suffering from illness, but he was not allowed to wait even one day; and, together with his fellow prisoners, was forced to depart into banishment to Colluthion, in Cephro, one of the rudest parts of the Libyan desert.

When first S. Dionysius knew whither he was to go, he says that he felt afflicted; for it was said to be a place much exposed to the attacks of robbers, and quite without Christian inhabitants. He was comforted, however, by some of the brethren,

¹ Epist. ad Germ. Euseb. vii. 11.

who reminded him that many would follow the exiles, and that they should shortly assemble round them a little Church, even in the desert.

At first the Christian exiles met with very hostile treatment, being stoned and persecuted; but after awhile their patient labours were rewarded by the conversion of many amongst the surrounding heathen.¹ Wherever they were, these faithful servants of God ceased not to praise His holy Name. "In exile and persecution, we still celebrated the festival, and every place, marked by some particular affliction, was still a spot distinguished by our solemnities; the open field, the desert, the ship, the inn, the prison."²

The two years spent by S. Dionysius thus in exile, also produced various writings of instruction to his fellow Christians; but the fragments preserved in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, are all that remain to prove the value of those that are lost. It was probably between A.D. 259 and 260, that S. Dionysius returned to Alexandria, on the strength of the edict published by the Emperor Gallienus, as follows:—"The Emperor Cæsar Publius Licinius Gallienus Pius Felix Augustus, to Dionysius, Pinnas, Demetrius, and the other Bishops. We have given order that the indulgence of our bounty shall be extended throughout the

¹ Epist. ad Germ. Euseb. vii. 11.

² Euseb. vii. 22.

whole world, that all may depart from their religious retreats. Wherefore ye also may freely enjoy the benefit of our edict, so that no man shall molest you ; and what you now may lawfully enjoy, has long since been granted by me. And for this end, Aurelius Cyrenius, who has the chief administration of affairs, shall keep the copy of this edict now granted.”¹

But though peace was thus restored to the groaning nations, S. Dionysius had not yet peace in Alexandria, a city ever ready and ripe for sedition and commotion.² Æmilianus, the Prefect, now headed a rebellion ; and S. Dionysius draws a melancholy picture of the state into which the city was plunged. “It would be easier,” he wrote, “I would not say to go beyond the limits of the province, but even to travel from east to west, than to go from Alexandria to Alexandria itself. For the very heart of the city is more desolate and impassable than that vast and trackless desert which the Israelites traversed in two generations ; and our smooth and tranquil harbours have become like that sea which opened and arose like walls on both sides, enabling them to drive through, and in whose highway the Egyptians were overwhelmed. For often they appear like the Red Sea, from the frequent slaughters committed in them ; but the river which

¹ Euseb. vii. 13.

² Gibbon, i. 10.

washes the city has sometimes appeared more dry than the parched desert, and more exhausting than that in which Israel was so overcome with thirst on their journey, that they exclaimed against Moses, and the water flowed for them from the broken rock, by the power of Him Who Alone doeth wondrous works. Sometimes, also, it has so overflowed, that it has inundated all the country round; the roads and fields seeming to threaten that flood of waters which happened in the days of Noah. It also flows always polluted with blood and slaughter, and the constant drowning of men, such as it formerly was, when before Pharaoh, it was changed by Moses into blood and putrid matter. And what other purification could be applied to water, which itself purifies all? Could that vast and impassable ocean ever wash away this bitter sea? or could that great river itself, which flowed from Eden, though it poured the four heads into which it was divided into one Gihon, wash away this filth? When will this air, corrupted as it is by the noxious exhalations everywhere rising, become pure and serene? For there are such vapours from the earth, and such storms from the sea breezes, from the rivers and mists coming from the harbours, that make it appear as if we should have for dew the gore of those dead bodies that are putrefying in all the elements around us.

Then, and notwithstanding all this, men wonder, and are at a loss to know whence come the constant plagues, whence these malignant diseases, whence those varied infections, whence all that immense destruction of human life, and wherefore it is, that this mighty city no longer cherishes within it such a number of inhabitants, from speechless children to the aged and decrepid, as it formerly had of those who were firm and vigorous in years. Those of forty and up to seventy, were so much the more numerous once, that their number cannot now be made up, if even those from fourteen to eighty were inserted and enrolled among the receivers of the public grain. And those who in appearance are but the youngest, are now as of an age with those formerly the oldest. And yet, though they constantly see the human race diminishing and constantly wasting away, in the very midst of this increasing destruction, and this annihilation, they are not alarmed.”¹

From such a state of things we can hardly wonder if that fearful pestilence, which lasted from the year 250 to 265,² was even fiercer and more devastating in its results here than elsewhere. S. Dionysius compares it to the land of Egypt, when in every house there was one dead—all was mourn-

¹ Epist. ad Hierax. Euseb. vii. 21.

² Gibbon, i. 10.

ing and anguish, and the groans of the dying resounded through the city.¹

In Alexandria, as in Carthage and Neo-cæsarea, indeed as in all places where Christianity had softened the hearts of men, the Bishop and his flock were the benefactors of the city. They regarded this calamity in common with all other similar events as a "school for discipline and probation."² Whilst the heathen "repelled those who began to be sick, and avoided their dearest friends, casting them out into the roads half dead, or throwing them when dead without burial, striving to shun any communication and participation in death, which it was impossible to avoid by every precaution and care,"³ the Christians devoted themselves to the exercise of charity, watching over the sick, "ministering to their bodily wants without fear, and without cessation," at the same time ministering to their immortal souls, and when these had fled, affording to their remains the last privileges appertaining to that which has been consecrated as the temple of the HOLY GHOST. It was impossible but that some must imbibe the infection which they thus rather sought than shunned, and many, after saving the lives of numbers, died themselves. "The best of our brethren," S. Dionysius wrote, "have departed life in this way, some presbyters,

¹ Euseb. vii. 22.

² Ib.

³ Ib.

some deacons, and of the people some that we esteemed the most.”¹

Another source of trouble to the Church at this period was the Millennarian heresy, which had been espoused by one Nepos, an Egyptian Bishop, eminent for his learning and general piety.² Nepos himself was dead, but he had left a book behind him, expounding the Scripture promises to imply a Millennium on earth, prolific in sensual and earthly enjoyments, which book was misleading many to forget or lightly esteem the grand doctrines of our Blessed LORD’s final Coming, and the Judgment Day. S. Dionysius not only wrote against these condemnable opinions, but also called together an assembly of Priests and Deacons at Arsinoe, in order to examine into the doctrine, and display its corruptions. For three days the Bishop sat patiently arguing with the Millennarians; and his account of the manner in which the controversy was conducted, is an instructive lesson for all unfortunate enough to be involved in controversial argument: “I was greatly pleased,” he says, “to observe the constancy, the sincerity, the docility, and intelligence of the brethren, so moderately and methodically did we propose our questions and

¹ Euseb. vii. 22.—The Church of Rome commemorates these nameless martyrs on Feb. 28th.

² Euseb. vii. 24.

doubts, and concessions, for we carefully and studiously avoided, in every possible way, insisting upon those opinions which might be offensive, though they might be maintained by us, and seem to be correct. Nor did we attempt to evade objections, but endeavoured, as far as possible, to keep to our subject, and to confirm these. Nor ashamed if reason prevailed, to change opinions, and to acknowledge the truth, but rather received with a good conscience and sincerity, and with single hearts before God, whatever was established by the proofs and doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. At length Coracion, who was the head and leader of this doctrine, in the hearing of all the brethren present, confessed and avowed to us, that he would no longer adhere to it, nor discuss it, that he would neither mention nor teach it, as he had been fully convinced by the opposite arguments. The other brethren present rejoiced also at this conference, and at the conciliatory spirit and unanimity exhibited by all.”¹

Thus truth and Christian charity triumphed more effectually than the strong arm of might and power can ever do, for the thoughts of man’s heart who can bind? A more remarkable heresy, and one yet more pernicious to the Catholic Truth, was the Sabellian heresy, now promulgated in the Christian world. The seeds of this heresy had

¹ Euseb. vii. 24.

already existed in those of Ebion, Valentinian,¹ and Praxeas, they were fostered by Noetus, of Smyrna, and brought to a height by his disciple Sabellius, a Libyan, who threw his native city Ptolemais, in Pentapolis, into great disorder by propagating his impious dogma, which was "replete with blasphemy towards Almighty God and the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and abounded also in much infidelity in regard to His Only Begotten SON, and the first born of all creation, the Incarnate Word; and also in irreverence to the HOLY SPIRIT."²

This dogma consisted in denying the Three Persons of the HOLY TRINITY; Sabellius acknowledged their separate influence, but maintained that there was only One Divine Person, Who displayed Himself sometimes as FATHER, sometimes as SON, sometimes as HOLY GHOST."³ According to some, he appears to have joined with Paul of Samosata in affirming that our Blessed LORD was merely human;⁴ which is not consistent with the doctrine that the FATHER coming upon earth in the form of the SON, suffered death, which assertion subsequently gained for the Sabellians the name of Patripassians.⁵

S. Dionysius was beset on all sides to interfere

¹ Theodoret, i. 4.

² Euseb. vii. 7.

³ Theodoret, v. 9.

⁴ Socrates, ii. 20.

⁵ See Tillemont, Tome iv. Art. Les Sabellians.

in this matter, concerning which he wrote energetically, and more urgently than his wont, for even certain Libyan Bishops were infected with the heresy. In his anxiety to remove the dangerous confusion of the Ever Blessed Persons of the TRINITY, S. Dionysius expressed himself so strongly that some imputed to him a leaning to the opposite extreme, and accused him of holding an inequality between the Three Eternal, Uncreate, and Incomprehensible. He was accused of this to Dionysius, the successor of Sixtus in the Roman See, who in the name of a council then sitting at Rome, wrote to the Bishop of Alexandria, and he in reply addressed four books to Dionysius of Rome,¹ proving the injustice of the accusation, and the Catholicity of his doctrine. This work was considerably quoted by S. Athanasius, when the Arians at a subsequent period endeavoured to claim S. Dionysius as a supporter of their tenets, and hereby no better proof of the orthodoxy of the Bishop's doctrines could be desired, than the careful defence made of him by his great successor whose very name has become incorporated with this important part of Catholic doctrine throughout the Church.

The last matter of public importance in which S. Dionysius was concerned, was the heresy of

¹ Euseb. vii. 26.

Paul of Samosata, already alluded to.¹ When the synod of Antioch was assembled to take cognizance of this matter, S. Dionysius was earnestly requested to attend, but his age and great bodily infirmities wholly incapacitating him for the journey, he wrote to the council instead, strongly condemning the heresy of Paul,² which letter was made public and sent to all the Bishops, when a few years later Paul of Samosata was finally condemned and deposed.

But before that time arrived, the venerable saint had laid aside the infirmities of the flesh, and had entered calmly into his rest,³ never more to be wearied with contentions and heresies, but to be arrayed in the fine linen white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints, and sit at the Marriage Supper of the LAMB.⁴

It has been supposed by some, that S. Dionysius and S. Gregory Thaumaturgus departed this life at the same moment, but this error has probably arisen from both having died on the same day (November 17th), though in different years. The Church of Rome commemorates both on that day.

¹ See Life of S. Greg. Thaum.

² Euseb. vii. 27.

³ Euseb. vii. 28.

⁴ Rev. viii. 8, 9.

S. GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

“ Meek Nazianzen, whom a mother’s love
Vow’d from the womb, a Christian Nazarite !
A friend’s, a brother’s care fill’d thy calm sprite,
And filial grace serene : the hallowing dove
Then open’d thy full heart to God above,
Seeking in solitudes the gentler light
Of woods and wilds, peace-loving Eremite !
Good Basil ! thy companion gently prove,
Shrinking from pastoral cares : and may Heaven’s King
His service not reject, nor choice refuse !
Each for his sphere He mouldeth : each doth earn
His place from Him ; His dove hath many hues,
Some lead His flock, while some His praises sing ;
Some in His inner Temple incense burn.”

S. GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

CHAPTER I.

“Holiness on the head ;
Light and perfections on the breast ;
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead,
To lead them unto life and rest ;—
Thus are true Aarons drest.”

GEO. HERBERT.

CAPPADOCIA.—ITS REPUTATION.—GREGORY THE ELDER.—
NONNA.—GREGORY'S CONVERSION.—HIS CONSECRATION
TO THE SEE OF NAZIANZUM.

THE province of Cappadocia, whose boast it is to be the fatherland of S. Gregory, bore no high reputation for virtue or religion—on the contrary its people had the unenviable distinction of being classed as one of the three vilest and most perverse nations in the world.¹ But as without the fertilizing warmth of God's sun, and the refreshing moisture of the dew He sends upon the earth, the richest soil would fail to bring forth its harvest, so

¹ The Carians and Cretans completed the dishonored number.

that bright and blessed sun and soft reviving dew, can nourish and cause to spring into luxuriance the seed in the rock's barren cleft, till a noble and beautiful tree appears from that soil which we thought

“Lavish of thorns and worthless weeds alone.”

So in the moral world, not always does holiness necessarily devolve upon the children of a consecrated soil, else now were not those sacred spots where once the sacred Footsteps of the Crucified rested, haunts of robbers and barbarians ; and the children of Abraham were not scattered, a degenerate and despised people, throughout the world. Were local holiness indeed an intact heritage, we should not as now have to mourn over ruined and desecrated sanctuaries, abbeys, and chantries ; nor find the emblem of salvation an all but unknown symbol, where once it reared its blessed and sanctifying form from north to south—from east to west. Turn where we may, in the natural or the moral world, we find good and evil ever intermingling—a Cain and an Abel—a Jacob and an Esau—an Eli and a Phineas—a Luke and a Demas. One Alone is pure, perfect, and ever the same—with Whom is no varying neither shadow of changing. Not so with men, and their feeble imperfect works. But while Cappadocia inherits the disgrace of an

¹ Socrat. iv. 11.

evil reputation, she likewise inherits no small glory in the fame of two of her sons, who rank among the greatest and most venerable Fathers of the Church, S. Basil the great, and S. Gregory of Nazianzum. "Most Christian provinces," (so writes an old ecclesiastical historian) "boast only of one of those holy men, whom we may call the masterpieces of grace. Egypt, her Athanasius; Syria, her Eustathius, and later Meletius; Mesopotamia, her James of Nisibis; Cyprus, her Spiridion; Thrace, her Chrysostom; Pannonia, her Martin; Italy, her Ambrose; France, her Hilary; Spain, her Hosius; and Africa, her Augustine. But Cappadocia at one and the same time owned the great Basil and Gregory, besides Gregory of Nyssa and Amphilocheus."¹

Nazianzum, the scene at once of Gregory's entrance into this lower life of cares and troubles, and his departure thence to the land of perpetual light and eternal peace; this Nazianzum was situate in that part of Cappadocia called Tiberina. He was born in a suburb by name Arianzum.

His father, likewise called Gregory, had been an idolater, and from the errors of heathenism had fallen into those of a sect known as the Hypsistarians, whose tenets have been described as "made up of Judaism and Paganism, or rather some select

¹ Tillemont. Hist. Eccles. t. ix. 305.

rites of each.”¹ They professed to own no God but the Almighty, supreme, and most High God. It would appear that Gregory was consistent in acting up to his light, and so inviting the God Whom he ignorantly worshipped, to open his mind to the true faith as it is in CHRIST JESUS. His purity of life, his charity and gentleness towards all men, in speaking of which his son says that he was “at the same time most lofty in his life, and most humble in his spirit; in virtue unapproachable, but for intercourse most easy of approach;”² and his freedom from all greediness after mere gain, (demonstrated by the fact that although the most influential person in his native place, he never augmented his private property in any way), these qualities were more worthy of Christianity than those we too often find among the professors of that holy name.

His wealth was not great, but one possession he was blessed with, which is indeed more valuable than gold and precious stones, a wife worthy to be named with the pious Monicas, Paulas, and Macrinas, whose holy examples are as bright shining lights to the daughters of the Church. Nonna, for such was her name, was descended from a race of Christian ancestors, and her son in describing her tells us, that though her body was

¹ Cave, 1.

² Orat. xviii.

weak and womanly, her soul had all the energy and devotion of the most gifted men. Yet she gave all honor to her husband, counting him her lord, and ever esteeming herself last and lowest among the least. The things of this world and the cares appertaining to them only engaged her so far as she was able to consecrate them all to God, storing all her hopes in heaven, so that she herself might rise thither with more freedom. Possessed of great personal beauty, she made no account of it, esteeming the only real beauty to be that Divine Image which she would fain engrave upon her soul, and far before all earthly rank she prized that glorious title which she truly bore, a child of God. So with riches ; those only which no one could take from her were valuable in her eyes, and had she possessed endless wealth it would never have sufficed to her charity, for whatever she had, she considered to be only held in trust for God and His poor. In her native city, Nonna was called the protectress of widows and the mother of orphans. Nor did her husband seek to check her holy liberality, entrusting to her the entire control of their property, a trust of which she proved herself worthy, by giving the utmost care and diligence to the regulation of her household duties ; so that she performed them as well as if she had no religious duties, and her religious duties as well as if she had no household

cares ; giving a lesson by which women of all ages may profit, that so far from one duty hindering and impeding another, each should forward and prosper the other ; everything, even the least duties being sanctified and consecrated by being done for the Glory of God and under the consciousness of His Immediate Presence. Her prayers, (which were ceaselessly rising up to God) were characterized by no common degree of faith and confidence in their fulfilment ; the fruit, remarks her son, of the experience she had already had of God's liberality and goodness. Her reverence for all sacred things, and her dutiful observance of all rites and ceremonies is especially noticed, and S. Gregory (from whom we learn all these details concerning his cherished mother), fittingly compares her to that virtuous woman of whom King Solomon speaks, saying :

“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. . . . She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. . . . She stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

“ . . . Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom ; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

“She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed ; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

"Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates."¹

Such a wife, married to one so well prepared to receive the true and pure faith as Gregory was, could hardly fail to fulfil S. Paul's declaration, that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. . . . For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ?"² Faithfully as she loved him, and deeply as she revered his honorable, estimable life, Nonna, a Christian herself, could not but feel that the utmost moral purity, the most admirable worldly probity and uprightness, are in themselves cold and dead, until kindled with the bright light of that faith which alone is truly pure, noble, and great—the faith of CHRIST Crucified ; and in behalf of this gift for her husband, she watched and prayed, she wept and fasted, besieging heaven with her intreaties ; while towards Gregory himself she employed the most hopeful of all means of conversion,—the constant example of her own piety and faith.

¹ Prov. xxxi.

² 1 Cor. vii. 14, 16.

Her prayers were granted: for some time Gregory remained in a wavering state, inclining towards the faith, yet unable wholly to determine on adopting it, when one night his resolutions were fixed by a dream, in which he who had always had a special objection to chanting Psalms, and had ever refused to join his wife in this pious practice, heard himself chanting a verse of the 122nd Psalm,—“I was glad when they said unto me : we will go into the house of the LORD.”

This dream filled Gregory with a strange and altogether new delight, and he willingly received his wife's interpretation, that God Himself had called him to the faith. The occurrence took place just at the time that the Catholic Prelates were assembling at Nice, there to take measures against the Arian heresy ; and it so happened that Leontius, Bishop of Cæsarea, and some others, came to Nazianzum on their way. Gregory made application to Leontius, expressing his earnest desire to become a Christian, and dedicate the remainder of his life to the service of God. He was received by the Bishop, and examined by the assembled Prelates among other catechumens. A little incident occurred on this occasion which did not escape notice, and was by some received as ominous. The catechist who ordered the proceedings, instead of causing Gregory to stand, as was usual for catechumens, allowed

him to kneel all the time,—a posture only maintained by the candidates for ordination.

After some short period, spent in earnest preparation for his Baptism, that holy Sacrament was administered; and as Gregory came up from the font, many persons, but especially the Bishop of Nazianzum, perceived a bright light shining round him, and the latter, as he proceeded to administer confirmation to him, exclaimed, in the hearing of all the people, that he anointed him to be his successor in the See.

Gregory's conversion was not altogether without its trials; his own mother, who was either still in heathen error, or else of the Hypsistarian sect, was grievously offended at him; so that she broke off all intercourse with him, and deprived him of his inheritance. Some have supposed that he was forced to fly for a time into voluntary exile; but it seems more probable that his son (from whose words the impression is derived) intended rather to speak of that exile in which all who are here but strangers and pilgrims, sighing after their heavenly home, must ever deem themselves.

No great length of time intervened between Gregory's Baptism and his elevation to the Episcopal See, since the latter event seems to have taken place about the year 329, when he was fifty years of age. From the repeated mention made of

him by his more famous son, we gather that Gregory was of an eager and yet very gentle and yielding character, devoted to his duties, and fervent in the practice of secret austerities, yet somewhat too easily overborne by those of stronger and more impetuous natures. His abilities were rather useful than brilliant, and he was altogether deficient in the gift of eloquence; yet his son remarks that, thanks to the example which accompanied his discourses, they were by no means lacking in fruit. The See of Nazianzum had been greatly neglected, having been left long without any Bishop; and he who had baptized Gregory, though a man of exceeding piety and personal holiness, was unequal to the task of ruling. But the new Bishop gradually brought about a better state of things, and remedied the wild, undisciplined condition in which he found his diocese. His lot had fallen in heavy and troublous times, when heresies and the spirit of self-seeking, and the desecration of holy things stalked the land; times truly, wherein the Fathers and Chief Shepherds of the flock stand in need of firmness, courage, resolution, and wisdom,—so that by their prudent and loving treatment of the erring, and their unvarying faithful support of the orthodox, (even though they may be oppressed, and going contrary to the tide of popular opinion,) they may rule wisely in God's vineyard, and boldly set

forward the Truth in good report or evil report alike. Happy the Church who has such rulers; rulers who stand firm, not on the grounds of their own erring judgment, or on the tumultuous outcry of the multitude, but whose faith, doctrine, and practice know no varying, no shifting, because, by the blessing of Almighty God, Who has promised that no storms or waves shall prevail against it, it is founded on a Rock.

“Happy are the people who are in such a case: yea, blessed are the people who have the LORD for their God.”

CHAPTER II.

“ His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles ;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate ;
His tears, pure messengers sent from his heart ;
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

BIRTH OF GREGORY.—EARLY TRAINING—AND DEVOTION.—
GOES TO CÆSAREA—AND ALEXANDRIA.—STORM.—JULIAN
THE APOSTATE.—FRIENDSHIP WITH S. BASIL.—CÆSARIUS.
—GREGORY RETURNS HOME.—HIS MANNER OF LIFE.—
DEATH OF CÆSARIUS.—GREGORY VISITS S. BASIL.

SUCH were the parents from whom it pleased God that one destined to serve His Church in no small measure of holiness, and to be remembered among the saints with love and reverence to all ages, should descend. Like Hannah, the pious Nonna had earnestly besought the LORD to grant her a son, and like her she vowed, if her prayer were granted, that she would for ever dedicate the precious gift unto the LORD. In a vision Nonna received an assurance that her petition was heard, and about the year 329, her heart was made glad by the birth of a son, whom she received with an overflowing

heart of gratitude, and without delay renewed his dedication ; to use his own words, putting him from her own breast into the Arms of God, the most precious gift she could offer.

It might naturally be expected, that having entered the world under such peculiar circumstances, and so set apart from its contaminations, the little Gregory would receive a more than usually holy and religious education ; accordingly, we find that he was distinguished even in childhood for the maturity and sweetness of his disposition, and for his avidity in pursuing the study of God's Word and all things appertaining to it. Thus trained and fostered, it need be no matter of surprise to find his tender mind influenced by a dream, which he received as a more than ordinary intimation of God's Will.

"Let those whose souls are profane," he writes, "stop their ears, but let those who are filled with the SPIRIT of God hearken. I was in that tender age, which having no original ideas of good and evil, easily receives extraneous impressions. My father and mother strove to imbue me with what was most excellent, and most in accordance with their own eminent piety ; and my soul easily received their impress. One day while I slept, in my dream I beheld two virgins alike in age and in beauty, arrayed in maiden modesty, with no orna-

ment upon their flowing white robes. Their eyes were cast down, and their faces veiled, yet their veils did not hide the blushes with which modesty overspread their countenances, while their lips marked their love for silence. At the sight of them I was filled with joy, for they seemed to me far beyond humanity. They on their part embraced me, and caressed me as a child whom they loved tenderly, and when I asked who they were, they told me that they were Wisdom¹ and Chastity, the handmaidens of the SAVIOUR, and the special friends of all those who devoted themselves to a heavenly life. They exhorted me to unite my heart and spirit to theirs, so that being filled with the bright light of purity, they might present me before the Light of the Eternal TRINITY. When they had done speaking, they winged their way back to heaven, whither my eyes followed them as long as it was possible."²

This dream, in itself to be easily accounted for in one whose mind was so turned to such subjects, had a considerable influence upon Gregory. He treasured up the grateful impression, and devoted himself to the service of chastity with all the enthusiasm of a young and chivalrous heart, preparing to

¹ Wisdom taken in the sense of religion as used by King Solomon.

² Car. v. p. 73, quoted by Tillemont.

wage war against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. In this spirit he not only resolved never to contract any engagement in marriage, but likewise he resolutely forsook for ever the pleasures and amusements of his fellows, hunting, feasts, and shows; he renounced all gay and expensive garments, and strove to accord his language to the spirit of the precept, "Let your speech be garnished with salt. Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil."

The first instructions Gregory received beyond the paternal roof were at Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, where his friendship with S. Basil began—a friendship destined later on to ripen into a love passing all ordinary friendships of worldly men. After a time, however, he set forth on a more extended journey, together with his only brother Cæsarius. The latter however went to Alexandria, and for the first time in their life the brothers separated; Gregory sojourning awhile at Cæsarea Philippi, where he studied under Thespesius, the orator, whose reputation was high. Here his great pursuit was that highly finished rhetoric and eloquence, for which few have ever equalled Gregory. But while earnestly devoting himself to these studies, he never forsook or neglected those which he justly esteemed as far more weighty, nor yielded to the

temptation of becoming absorbed in the fascinating entanglement of mere worldly and intellectual science and attainment. It was ever his maxim that profane literature should be employed as the servant and auxiliary of sacred learning, and lay all its treasures tribute at her feet. And why should not the costly gift of eloquence, that mighty agent wherewith to wield the hearts of men, be used as all God's other great gifts, to the honor and glory of its Giver? Why should that great power be abandoned to those who will abuse it? Why should not the words of wisdom come forth from lips that have been touched with the living coal of God's altar, and spread abroad the matchless words of the Truth, embellished and rendered more fruitful by the cultivation of a power bestowed on man alone, and destined unquestionably to promote his capability for glorifying his Maker? Moreover, there is need of a truth that the warriors and combatants of the Faith be well armed, both in spiritual and temporal learning, that their armour be bright and well proved, so that they may be ready to stand bravely in the time of danger, and bravely contend for the faith delivered unto the saints.

These studies Gregory prosecuted still further at Alexandria, and from thence he resolved on proceeding to Athens, the head-quarters of learning

and science. Once determined on this course, his impatience could not be restrained, and notwithstanding the winter season, which rendered the voyage one of considerable peril, he hastened to take ship. A furious tempest overtook the vessel somewhere near the coast of Cyprus, and all the crew gave themselves up for lost. Cries and sobs were heard on all sides, and those who in safety and prosperity never thought to call upon the Name of God, now invoked Him in their bitter anguish and dread. During twenty days the ship was tossed hither and thither, they knew not where, and in addition to the great peril of being wrecked, her unhappy crew suffered cruelly from thirst, all their fresh water being exhausted. Throughout this time of terror none experienced so great grief as Gregory, for he was as yet unbaptized; and while his companions were bemoaning the prospect of natural death, all his thoughts and fears were concentrated on that of his soul, for which he so greatly feared. Day and night he lay prostrate before God, intreating His Mercy, that he might come out of this peril, and be permitted to reach the laver of regeneration; his vows of perpetual dedication were fervently renewed with a yet firmer purpose than before, and thus out of his very weakness grew strength.¹

¹ Orat. xviii.

At that very time his parents, keenly alive doubtless to the perils to which their absent children might be exposed, were praying for his preservation. Their united prayers were heard, and the vessel was saved; all her crew, (who attributed their almost miraculous preservation to Gregory's intreaties,) becoming Christians. Well might he cry with King David:

"Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O LORD: LORD, hear my voice.

"O let Thine ears consider well: the voice of my complaint.

"If Thou, LORD, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O LORD, who may abide it?

"For there is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared.

"I look for the LORD: my soul doth wait for Him: in His Word is my trust."

And even so, with Jonah:

"I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice.

"For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me.

"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy Sight; yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple.

"The waters compassed me about, even to the

soul : the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

“ I went down to the bottoms of the mountains ; the earth with her bars was about me for ever : yet hast Thou brought up ~~my~~ life from corruption, O LORD my GOD. .

“ When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD : and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple.

. . . . “ I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving ; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”

Arrived in safety at Athens, a new epoch in Gregory's life began, in which, though admired and flattered for his talents and striking qualities, he yet had courage to adhere firmly to his resolutions of forsaking the world and its dazzling fascinations. In this purpose he was aided and stimulated by his friend Basil, who shortly followed him to Athens in the year 351.

We have already spoken in the life of S. Basil of the friendship of these two while pursuing the same studies, and how they were unlike the mass of their fellow students in the purity and diligence of their lives. One of these fellow-students was Julian, afterwards Emperor, and distinguished as the Apostate. Even at that early period Gregory seems to have fathomed the character of this man,

who was destined to become so great an enemy to the Faith of CHRIST. "I had foreseen it all," he writes,¹ "from the time I became acquainted with him at Athens. Thither he came, by permission of the Emperor, soon after the change in his brother's fortune. His motive for this visit was two-fold: one reason was honorable to him, namely, to see Greece and attend the schools there; the other was a clandestine one, which few knew anything about, for his impiety had not yet presumed to openly avow itself, i.e., to have opportunity of consulting the sacrificers and other impostors respecting his own destiny. I well remember that even then I was no bad diviner concerning this person, although I by no means pretend to be one of those skilled in the art of divination; but the fickleness of his disposition, and the incredible extravagancy of his mind, rendered me prophetic; if indeed he is the best prophet whose conjectures are verified by subsequent events. For it seemed to me that no good was portended by a neck seldom steady, the frequent shrugging of shoulders, an eye scowling and always in motion, together with a frensied aspect; a gait irregular and tottering, a nose breathing only contempt and insult, with ridiculous contortions of countenance expressive of the same thing; im-

¹ Orat. 11. Quoted by Soc. iii. 23.

moderate and very loud laughter, nods as it were of assent, and drawings back of the head as if in denial, without any visible cause ; speech with hesitancy and interrupted by his breathing ; disorderly and senseless questions, with answers of a corresponding character, all jumbled together without the least consistency or method. Long before time had developed in action the sort of person he really was, I had foreseen what his conduct has made manifest. And if any of those who were then present and heard me, were now here, they would readily testify that when I observed these prognostics I exclaimed, ‘ Ah, how great a mischief to itself is the Roman empire fostering ! ’ And that when I had uttered these words, I prayed God that I might be a false prophet. For it would have been far happier that I should have been convicted of having formed an erroneous judgment, than that the world should be filled with so many calamities.”

Gregory himself writes thus concerning himself and his chosen friend Basil :

“ Athens and letters followed on my stage ;
Others may tell how I encountered them ;
How in the fear of God, and foremost found
Of those who knew a more than mortal love :
And how, amid the venture and the rush
Of maddened youth with youth in rivalry,
My tranquil course ran like some fabled spring,
Which bubbles fresh beneath the turbid brine ;

Not drawn away by those who lure to ill,
But drawing dear ones to the better part.
There too, I gained a further gift of God,
Who made me friends with one of wisdom high,
Without compeer in learning and in life.
Ask ye his name ? in sooth 'twas Basil, since
My life's great gain, and there my fellow dear
In home, and studious search, and knowledge earned.
May I not boast how in our day we moved
A truest pair, not without name in Greece ;
Had all things common, and one only soul
In lodgment of a double outward frame ?
One special bond, the thought of God above,
And the high longing after holy things.
And each of us was bold to trust in each,
Unto the emptying of our deepest hearts,
And then we loved the more, for sympathy
Pleaded in each, and knit the twain in one."

The world seemed open to the two young men, who, already possessed of no small share of public esteem, might unquestionably have commanded all that the world holds forth most captivating to the man of ambition and science.¹ But they had higher views, and despised these attractions, subtle and luring as they were.² From the first Basil found no rest for his soul in the brilliant and fascinating city, or its pursuits. "Hollow blessedness," he called it all; and though Gregory, with his winning words of consolation, could for the moment re-

¹ Socrates, iv. 26.

² Sozomen, vi. 17.

assure his friend, and by his tender sympathy bind their souls still closer together, he could not give any permanent peace, or detain one destined to far higher things amid the world's vanities. There was, it would seem, a higher, more exalted tone about Basil's mind and resolutions; he was naturally grave and serious, of a somewhat mournful and desponding spirit; whereas Gregory was cheerful, buoyant, and impressionable. And accordingly, when Basil quitted Athens, and hastened towards the fulfilment of his aspirations after a life of retirement and holy asceticism, Gregory, who had resolved to accompany him, could not withstand the intreaties and remonstrances of all their teachers and friends, and remained behind for a short time. But his heart was not in the glitter of Athens; he had not forgotten his first love,—holy purity,—and he was restless and uneasy when Basil was gone. He thus describes the condition of his mind :—

“ Fierce was the whirlwind of my storm-tossed mind,
Searching, 'mid holiest ways, a holier still ;
Long had I nerved me in the depths to sink
Thoughts of the flesh, and then more strenuously.
Yet, while I gazed upon Diviner aims,
I had not wit to single out the best :
For, as is aye the wont in things of earth,
Each had its evil, each its nobleness.
I was the pilgrim of a toilsome course,

Q

Who had o'erpast the waves, and now look'd round
With anxious eye, to track his road by land.
Then did the awful Tishbite's image rise,
His highest Carmel, and his food uncouth ;
The Baptist, wealthy in his solitude,
And the unencumbered sons of Jonadab.
But soon I felt the love of holy books,
The spirit beaming bright in learned lore,
Which deserts could not bear, nor silence tell.
Long was the inward strife, till ended thus :—
I saw, when men lived in the fretful world,
They vantage'd other men, but wronged the while
Their own calm hearts, which straight by storms were tried.
They who retired held an uprighter port,
And raised their eyes with quiet strength towards God,
Yet served self only on moroser plan.
And so, 'twixt these and those, I struck my path,
To meditate with the free solitary,
Yet to live secular, and serve mankind."

Accordingly, resolving to combine the devotion of a solitary life with the usefulness of one yet mingling in the world, Gregory returned to his native place to visit his parents, promising his friend Basil shortly to join him, and labour together. He was joined at Constantinople by his brother Cæsarius, who had been studying meanwhile at Alexandria, and had distinguished himself greatly, both in the acquisition of eloquence, science in general, and that of medicine in particular. He was striking in appearance, and peculiarly attrac-

tive in manners, which, combined with his other advantages, caused him to make a great sensation in Constantinople ; and many efforts, even to the that of an application to the emperor, were made, to induce him to remain there as a physician. But Cæsarius yielded to his brother's earnest solicitations, and returned with him to Nazianzum ; and their venerable parents had once more the delight of seeing both their sons, who had so abundantly repaid all exertions in their behalf, under their roof.

Gregory found his presence much needed at home : his father had been worked upon by the heretical party, until almost unconsciously he had joined them ; and none save Gregory could hope to extricate him. Both parents likewise leant upon him as their chief stay and comfort ; so that Gregory found himself unable to fulfil his engagement and join Basil. Thus he writes :

“ I have not stood to my word, I own it, having protested, ever since Athens and our friendship and union of heart there, that I would be your companion, and follow a strict life with you. Yet I act against my wish,—duty annulled by duty,—the duty of friendship by the duty of filial reverence. . . . However, I still shall be able to fulfil my promise in a measure, if you will accept thus much :—I will come to you for a time, if in turn you will give me

your company here. Thus we shall be quits in friendly service, while we have all things common ; and thus I shall avoid distressing my parents, without losing you.”¹

Accordingly, he now devoted himself to serving God, in tending his parents to the utmost of his power. “I have opened my mouth, and called upon the HOLY SPIRIT,” he says ;² “to Him I dedicate all that I have, and all that I am, what I do, and what I leave undone ; my words, and my silence. My sole desire is that He should possess me, conduct me, guide my hand, my spirit, and my lips, to all that is good and pleasing in His Sight, and away from all that He would have me shun. I am the instrument of God,—a pleasant instrument,—which, having God Himself for its Author and Regulator, gives forth a good harmony through His Grace.” And elsewhere,—“I have given all to Him Who has received and preserved me as His own. To Him I have dedicated my goods, my fame, my health, and my talents, whether of speech or other ; the only share I retain in these possessions is contempt for them, and joy that there is somewhat I can sacrifice for JESUS CHRIST. God’s Word is sweeter to me than honey. I have called prudence to my aid, and I have consecrated my voice to heavenly wisdom. My daily labour is to mode-

¹ Ep. v.

² Orat. viii.

rate my temper, to bridle my tongue, control my eyes, keep the strict bounds of temperance, and trample all earthly glory under foot.”¹

In accordance with this Gregory’s manner of life was simple and austere to the highest degree—bread, salt, and water his chief diet, and all other personal restrictions in keeping. His couch was the bare ground, and often his nights passed in prayers and tears too abundant to admit of sleep. He abounded in study and devotional practices.

Cæsarius had remained but a short time at home and then returned to Constantinople, where he became a pre-eminent favorite with the Emperor, Julian the apostate. He was the first physician in the city, and from the general esteem and indeed we might almost say adoration in which he was held, seemed to be one of the first persons there. His life appears to have been singularly admirable and proof against the dangers and temptations of so perilous a position. But neither his parents nor his brother could be happy to see him in such danger, which they considered to be directly tempting God’s Providence, and highly displeasing to Him. That a Christian, and the son of a Bishop should remain within so profligate and sacrilegious a court, the friend and servant of an Emperor who was persecuting the Christians, appeared to them

¹ Orat. i.

to be wholly inexcusable. Gregory therefore wrote to Cæsarius, setting before him this view of his position in the most earnest and forcible manner, intreating him to sacrifice all worldly objects, and rejoice in so doing ; and not to go on in pursuit of an empty good which would turn to bitterness and misery at last. The young physician did not turn a deaf ear to his brother's counsels ; Julian entered into discussion and argument with him, and was completely discomfited ; at the conclusion of their contest Cæsarius announced his firm resolution to abide in the faith, and to forsake the court, which accordingly he did, much to the Emperor's regret. Subsequently in the reign of Valens he returned, and again filled the office of imperial treasurer. He narrowly escaped with his life at the time of a grievous earthquake which destroyed great part of Bithynia. Gregory, who had always regretted his brother's return into the dangers of the court, availed himself of this opportunity to urge upon him the reflection of the shortness of life, and urged him to come home, and join his thanksgivings for deliverance to those of his family. His desires were accomplished ; Cæsarius forsook the service of his earthly Sovereign in order to give himself entirely to that of his Heavenly King, and but a short time after his return home, a sudden illness coming upon him, he died ; leaving

but one short sentence for his will. "My will is, that all I have be given to the poor."¹

His holiness of life amid the dangers of his position, and his many virtues caused Cæsarius to be universally regretted, and his name to be inscribed in the Church's martyrologies.

But we have anticipated, and must return to a time previous to his death, in which Gregory fulfilled his promise, and visited Basil in his retirement in Pontus. Of this he gives a humorous description in a letter to Basil, alluding to "the dwelling without roof and without door, the hearth without fire or smoke, walls however, baked enough, lest the mud should trickle on us, while we suffer Tantalus's penalty, thirst amid wet; that sad and hungry banquet, for which you called me from Cappadocia, not as for the frugal fare of the Lotophagi, but as if for Alcinous's board for one lately shipwrecked and wretched. I have remembrance of the bread and of the broth—(so they were named), and shall remember them: how my teeth got stuck in the hunches, and next lifted and heaved themselves as out of paste. You indeed will set it out in tragic style yourself, taking a sublime tone from your own sufferings. But for me, unless that true lady Bountiful, your mother, had rescued me quickly, showing herself in need, like a haven to

¹ Τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα βούλομαι γενέσθαι τῶν πτωχῶν.

the tempest-tossed, I had been dead long ago, getting myself little honor, but much pity, from Pontic hospitality. How shall I omit those ungarden-like gardens, void of pot-herbs? or the Augean store, which we cleared out and spread over them; what time we worked the hill-side plough; vineplanter I, and awful you, with this neck and hands, which still bear the marks of the toil, not to yoke the Hellespont, but to level the steep. If you are not annoyed at this description, nor am I; but if you are, much more I at the reality. Yet I pass over the greater part, for tender remembrance of those other many things which I have shared with you.”¹

Apparently, Basil did not altogether like the jesting and depreciating tone in which his friend spoke of his cherished solitude, of which he had himself given a far different account,² for in Gregory’s next letter, he says,

“What I wrote before concerning your Pontic abode, was in jest, not in earnest; but now I write very much in earnest. ‘Who shall make me as in months past, as in the days when I had the luxury of suffering hardships with you? since voluntary pain is higher than involuntary comfort. Who shall restore me to those psalmodies, and vigils and departures to God through prayer, and that (as it were) immaterial and incorporeal life? or to that.

¹ Ep. viii.

² See Life of S. Basil, vol. i. p. 77.

union of brethren, in nature and soul, who are made as gods by you, and carried on high? or to that rivalry in virtue and sharpening of heart which we consigned to written decrees and canons? or to that loving study of divine oracles and the light we found in them, with the guidance of the Spirit? or to speak of lesser and lower things, to the bodily labours of the day, the wood-cutting and the stone-hewing, the planting and the draining? or that golden plane, more honorable than that of Xerxes, under which not a jaded king, but a weary monk, did sit? planted by me, watered by Apollos, (that is, your honorable self,) increased by God, unto my honor; that there should be preserved with you a memorial of my loving toil, as Aaron's rod that budded was, as Scripture says, and we believe, kept in the ark. It is very easy to wish all this, but not easy to gain. Do you however come to me, and revive my virtue, and work with me; and whatever benefit we once gained together, preserve for me by your prayers, lest otherwise I fade away little by little, as a shadow, while the day declines. For you are my breath, more than the air, and so far only do I live, as I am in your company, either present, or if absent, by your image."¹

It would have been difficult to find a position more congenial to the whole character of Gregory

¹ Ep. ix.

than this retreat, amid the joys of holy devotion, shared by the friend he so dearly loved. His exceeding delight in silence and solitude was displayed throughout his career, in which however so little of either was granted. But thus it often is. Men whose lot is cast amid struggles and heartaches look forward longingly to rest, and are carried through their heaviness and labour by the hope ever before them of rest and peace, which they believe certainly to be awaiting them. And so it is—not however, it may be, as they fondly imagine. Not rest on this side the grave, not the stilling of heartache and quivering pulses *here*; for of a truth the Christian's rule is most often, "Seek not for much rest, but much patience;" work, toil, watch, pray on and on; a few more struggles, a few more prayers, a few more sacraments, a few more moments of intense and bitter agony, in which we must sever the links that bind us and our "precious things" to earth; a few more acts of silent heroism, cutting off our right hand, and plucking out our right eye; a few more tears of blood, and cries wrung from our very souls for mercy, and then—*then* will the rest come of a truth—the LORD will come and will not tarry, and we shall rest with Him. How many like S. Gregory have yearned for silence and solitude, and found themselves thrust into the conflicts and strifes

of the world: how many would say with him, "Ye know not the pains and difficulties which overwhelm us in a position which to you appears so exalted and so brilliant. Not even among ourselves do all realize the exactitude with which God weighs our thoughts, our deeds, our words; nor is God Alone our Judge, for almost all men, however slow and unwilling to judge themselves, are quick and ready to judge others: they are ever ready to accuse us, and when they do not understand a matter, would rather tax us with impiety than themselves with ignorance. Truly you do not enough realize how precious a thing is silence."¹

Might not S. Gregory say now as then, "When I consider the itching tongues of the present day, and those found in men whose science has but sprung up since morning, who became suddenly theologians upon their ordination, and who took no further steps to become wise than wishing so to be, I burn with longing after the true wisdom and philosophy, and cry with the Prophet Jeremiah, O, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place, that I might leave my people, and go from them."²

This longing after repose must almost have been a danger to Gregory, and was one that we find him perpetually contending against. "My greatest business," he writes to S. Basil,³ "is to have no

¹ Orat. xxvi.² Orat. xxix.³ Epist. xxxii.

business ; and if you wish to know my good qualities, I so tenderly cherish inaction, that I think I may fairly set an example to the world how resolutely one may maintain that condition. If all resembled me in this, there would be more peace in the Churches, and the Faith would not be torn asunder as it is by those who use it as a cloak to their own private passions." "I have always loved repose and retreat as much as any man. Nothing seems to me worthy to be compared with the life of one who, dead to his senses, separated from the things of the body, and, as it were, out of the world, only mingles in its affairs when absolute necessity exists ; his whole conversation with God and his own soul, leads a life exalted above all the senses, his spirit ever filled with divine things, and so detached from the vain phantoms of the world that he resembles a spotless mirror, in which the Image of God and His Properties are reflected ; the light he has already received disposes him to receive more, leading him on to greater brightness, until he attains the dazzling source of eternal Light, and all shadows and reflections being banished by Truth itself, he attains to the fulness of his bliss. He who loves the same things as I do, will easily understand me, and readily forgive my desires after them."¹

¹ Orat. i. and xxix.

CHAPTER III.

“Some have greatness thrust upon them.”

SHAKESPEARE.

GREGORY ORDAINED PRIEST.—HIS RELUCTANCE.—DEATH OF JULIAN THE APOSTATE.—DOMESTIC AFFLICTIONS.—BASIL APPOINTS GREGORY TO THE SEE OF SASIMA.—DIFFERENCES ARISE BETWEEN THEM.—GREGORY ACTS AS COADJUTOR TO HIS FATHER.—DEATH OF THE ELDER GREGORY.

SWEET and pleasant indeed was the green retreat, where these holy men sought God unhindered, amid mountains and thick woods, watered with cool and transparent streams, revelling—ascetics as they were—in the exhalations from the earth, and the breezes from the river; where their one aim was to track the Footsteps of Him Who was their Guide unto salvation, and Who has said: “If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”¹ Pleasant too is it to us

“When wearied with the scenes their times disclose,
The eye first finds them out in their secure repose,”

¹ Basil, Ep. ii.

to linger rather there, and dwell upon the holy and devout scenes of peace and beauty; but with Gregory we must forsake the happy retreat, and watch him summoned to guard and aid his father, who being as we have already seen, of a feeble and easily over-ruled temperament, was seduced under false pretences by the Arian party to sign their formulary (that of Rimini), and who in consequence found himself plunged in great difficulties at home; for many of his flock, and especially the monks of Cappadocia, a pre-eminently orthodox body, separated instantly from him in the highest displeasure. "Peaceful and moderate in all else," says S. Gregory,¹ "in this matter they cannot yield or be pacified, for they would count endurance as treason towards God. Their ardent zeal impels them to the combat, inspires them with courage, and makes them vigorous and impetuous. They are less afraid of going beyond their duty than of falling short in the smallest degree of that which they deem incumbent on them. A large mass of the people follow them."

The greatest judgment and patience were needed in order to reconcile the contending parties, and restore harmony to the diocese. Gregory however succeeded in convincing his father of his errors, and inducing him to recant, and after a time peace

¹ Orat. xxi.

was completely re-established between the Bishop and his flock.

The elder Gregory, who was able to appreciate his son's admirable qualities, and the infinite service of which he would be to the Church, as a member of the Priesthood, resolved that he should receive Holy Orders. Gregory had from his birth been dedicated to God, and, as we have seen, he had renewed the dedication in riper years; he had of his own free will given up all worldly aims and attractions, and adopted a manner of life little acceptable to the natural man. It was not therefore any worldly or unworthy cause which made him so reluctant to enter upon the holy and weighty office of the Priesthood. From his own writings¹ we learn how far otherwise; he rather looked upon it with awful reverence, as a bright sun which dazzled his weak eyes. Not all men, he said, are called to govern the Church; some must be governed, and obey; and those who governed, who undertook to be the shepherds and guides of souls, should, according to his view, be as much raised above ordinary men as the spirit above the body; the pastor should be free from all failings, lest his flock should imitate not his virtues, but his vices; he ought to have conquered all his passions as far as is possible to man; and he who would be

¹ Orat. i., viii., ix.

a mediator between GOD and man, should first have been victorious in that war with himself which every true Christian must wage. Nor must the Priest of GOD be merely exempt from vice; he must be pre-eminent in virtue, and by his own continual progress in holiness incite others to the like, for CHRIST bids His Pastors gently lead His sheep, and not rudely drive them. His sole model should be the Word of CHRIST, and his sole limit of perfection that of his Perfect FATHER in heaven; his whole heart should be kindled with the fire of Divine love, and his whole intellect imbued with the mysteries of the Faith.

With so exalted an idea of the requisites of a true Priest, and so lowly a measure of his own attainments, no wonder that he trembled exceedingly when he reflected on the awful denunciations found in GOD'S Word against the hireling shepherd, and the watchman that doth not blow the trumpet to warn the people, at whose hand their blood shall be required. He put a literal construction on S. Paul's precepts, and believed that a pastor should be "blameless," and was very far from counting himself as having attained to such fitness.

Nor was his high standard of virtue Gregory's only consideration. Looking upon the Priests of GOD as spiritual physicians, and their healing-

craft one of far greater importance and honor than that of the mere bodily physician, he weighed well the exceeding difficulty they had to contend with, dealing with patients who for the most part are reluctant to be cured, and do their utmost to conceal and retain their diseases. He remembered the toils and weariness of the bodily physician, which are as nothing to those which he who ministers to the soul must endure, since they are the brethren and servants of JESUS CHRIST, Who gave His whole life and all His sufferings for our salvation. He considered how difficult it is to find fitting remedies for an endless variety of diseases and dispositions, and yet that the errors of ignorance or intention, involve all concerned in the greatest danger.

Then, again, as to doctrine, he thought over all the various errors which molested the Faith (the Arian and Sabellian heresies especially at that season harassing and troubling the Church), and the exceeding difficulty of avoiding at once error, mistaken zeal, self-interest, presumption, and vanity; and the evils resulting from these faults among the hearers. Contemplating all these bewildering difficulties, Gregory compared the guide of souls to one who had to govern an animal composed of the parts of a multiplicity of other animals, each requiring a diverse treatment; and without any false

humility he recoiled from voluntarily assuming a responsibility to which he felt unequal. He was not scared at the persecutions which Julian the Apostate inflicted on the Church. The lion, the stake, and the sword had no terrors for him, he only feared his own unworthiness, and the divisions which so cruelly rent the Church of CHRIST.

All these opinions and objections were well known to the Bishop of Nazianzum, but he still was resolved to secure an assistant and coadjutor in his devoted son; the people likewise earnestly desired that he should leave his retirement and minister to them, and accordingly taking him by surprise, his father ordained him on Christmas Day, A.D. 361. So completely was he overwhelmed, that he fled at once to his friend Basil in his Pontine solitude, there to recover from the discomposure into which he was plunged. "The chief cause of my departure," he writes,¹ "was my surprise at the unexpected event; as they who are astounded by sudden noises, I did not retain my power of reflection, and therefore I offended against modesty which I had cherished my whole time. . . . Who is there," he proceeds, "when he has not yet devoted himself and learned to receive God's hidden wisdom in mystery, being yet a

¹ Orat. i.

babe, yet fed on milk, yet unnumbered in Israel, yet unenlisted in GOD's army, yet unable to take up CHRIST's Cross as a man, not yet an honored member of Him at all, who would in spite of this submit with joy and readiness to be placed at the head of CHRIST's fulness ?¹ No one, if I am to be his counsellor ; for this is the greatest of alarms, this the extreme of dangers, to every one who understands the preciousness of success, and the ruin which attends on failure. Let another sail for traffic, so I said, and cross the expanse of ocean, and keep constant company with winds and waves, to gain much, if so be, and to risk much. This may suit a man apt in sailing, apt in trafficking ; but what I prefer is to remain on land, to plough a small glebe, to pay distant compliments to lucre and the sea, and thus to live, as I may be able, with a small and scanty loaf, and to lead on a life safe and surgeless, not to risk a vast and mighty danger for mighty gains. To a lofty mind indeed, it is a penalty not to attempt great things, not to exercise his powers upon many persons, but to abide in what is small, as if lighting a small house with a great light, or covering a child's body with a youth's armour ; but to the small it is safety to carry a small burden, not, by undertaking things above his powers, both to incur ridicule and danger,

¹ Eph. i. 23.

just as to build a tower becomes him only who has wherewith to finish."

But the "safe and surgeless" life is the lot of few, never perhaps of any whom God in His Wisdom has destined to be mighty instruments in His Hand for accomplishing His great works; storm and tempest, heaving, tossing billows of the dashing sea, the sharp, fearful rock, the treacherous eddy and whirlpool, the yawning depths, the deceitful sun gleam, and the raging wind; all in their turn are permitted to assail God's chosen servants: "perils in the wilderness, and perils in the sea;" but though they may assail him grievously, and harass him sorely, they cannot prevail against him, if his foundation be the Rock; but he will boldly claim the gracious promise that God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, and that because he trusteth in Him.

Very nearly at the same period of time, Basil was likewise consecrated to the Priesthood, with shrinking and reluctance, as we may gather from the tone in which Gregory addresses him: "You have been captured as well as I, and we are both fallen into the same snare; we are constrained to become Priests, without such being our intention. Of this certainly we are each other's witnesses that we have always loved the humblest, lowliest life; and perhaps it had been better for us not to be raised

to the Priesthood, at all events I dare not presume to say otherwise until I know what design and purpose GOD has in store regarding us. But since the deed is done, my opinion is that we must submit, and that mainly in consideration of the times, when we are attacked on all sides by heretics ; so that we may do nothing unworthy of the hopes entertained of us, or of the life we have hitherto led.”¹

Do we find similar shrinking, similar pious mistrust, similar holy reluctance among those who enter the Priesthood now ? Do we find men leading lives of the most watchful, practical devotion, fasting, praying, watching, giving all their substance in alms, restraining every earthly passion, acquiring the profoundest theological as well as ordinary attainments ; and then at last not only professing, but religiously believing themselves unequal to so solemn, so weighty a responsibility as that of standing before GOD, His “chosen Priest,” and deeming that such an one alone can be fit to wield the unearthly sword, who

“ On CHRIST stands waiting day and night,
Who trac’d His Holy Steps, nor ever ceas’d,
From Jordan banks to Bethphage height :

“ Who hath learn’d lowliness
From his LORD’s Cradle, patience from His Cross :
Whom poor men’s eyes and hearts consent to bless ;
To whom, for CHRIST, the world is loss :

¹ Epist. ii.

“ Who both in agony
Hath seen Him and in glory : and in both
Own'd Him Divine, and yielded, nothing loth,
Body and soul, to live and die,
In witness of his LORD,
In humble following of his SAVIOUR dear.”

But now, alas ! men crowd into the holy of holies as though it were a common place ; they buy and sell within the very temple walls, forgetful of Simon's sentence, and of the scourge, which once, in the Hand of God, sent forth the bold offenders. Better doves and money changing, than gain in holy things, and cold, dead worldliness.

The death of Julian the Apostate was regarded by the Christians as a deliverance from a cruel and merciless tyrant ; but under Valens they had much to endure from the Arian heretics. Diænius, Bishop of Cæsarea, had been tainted by this heresy, and his successor Eusebius, although orthodox, and therein agreeing with Basil, grew jealous of the increasing power and influence he was acquiring ; accordingly, in order to avoid disagreement and dissension, which must inevitably wound religion wheresoever they arise, Basil retired to his old solitude in Pontus. Gregory exerted himself vigorously to effect a reconciliation, and to this end we find him writing : “ This is the time for wise counsel and courage. We must exceed all

others in courage, and not allow all our past labours to be swept away in a moment. I say this, because our most gracious Bishop Eusebius has very friendly, very kind feelings towards us, and as steel in the fire, so he is softened by time. I expect that you will shortly hear from him, and even receive a summons to him, so he and his friends have hinted to me. Let us anticipate his advances, and either write or go to him; or better still, write first, and then appear before him, lest hereafter we be conquered dishonorably, when we might be conquered after an honorable and dignified fashion. Come then, I intreat, both for this reason, and because of the times, for the heretics are trampling the Church under foot. . . . Is there not a danger of their sweeping away the whole word of truth, unless the spirit of our Bezaleel speedily awake, our great master-builder of argument and doctrine. If you would have me be your companion, I am ready.”¹

To Eusebius himself he wrote, declaring that while Basil was slighted and treated with harshness, he could take no delight in the honors paid to himself. “Your favor towards me, and discountenance of him, is as if you should with one hand stroke my head, and with the other strike my cheek.” “Miserable indeed should we be,” he says

¹ Epist. xix.

again, "if while we seek after wisdom in other matters, and would choose the better part, we yet slighted that grace, which is the end of all our doctrine, Charity, especially in the case of our Bishops."¹

After a while the desired reconciliation was effected, and Gregory resumed his unobtrusive but pious offices at Nazianzum. He constantly preached, in which priestly office his excellence was remarkable; nor did he despise the gift of eloquence, for we find him declaring: "I have retained nothing for myself except eloquence, nor do I regret any of the labour and risks I ran on land and sea in search of it. I would desire this gift in its perfection for myself and all my friends. After the duties of religion and hopes of things invisible, it is the possession I have most cherished, and to which I cling the most."² "I offer, devote, and consecrate it to God. His voice and the working of His Holy Spirit has made me abandon all other things; changing all for the pearl of great price we read of in the Gospel; and thus have I become, or rather desire to become, that happy merchant who bartered vile and perishable things for things excellent and eternal. The minister of the Word, I retain no art save that of language; it is my choice, and I could not willingly forsake it, for I

¹ Epist. xx.

² Orat. iii.

take more delight therein than if I added thereto all that forms the delight of most men. Eloquence shall ever be the companion of my life, my faithful counsellor, and depositary of all my confidence, my helper in battle, my guide on my heavenward path. Since I have despised all earthly pleasures, my heart has but the more tended towards eloquence, or rather towards God, for it leads insensibly to Him, teaches us to know Him more dearly, preserves and strengthens that knowledge in us.”¹

Nor was it only in a public capacity that he was required by his aged father; heavy trials came upon the venerable Bishop and his wife, who outlived, as we have already seen, their son Cæsarius, and likewise Gorgonia, their only daughter, who was a young wife and mother, deservedly dear to her parents and all who knew her, through her piety and holiness, her quiet lowly goodness, and her great charity and kindness. Her end was a blessed one, attended by all those whose presence she could most have desired. Having taken leave of them, with parting words of exhortation to her husband and children, she died as she ended the IVth. Psalm. “I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest: for it is Thou only, O LORD, that makest me to dwell in safety.” In the year 370, Eusebius,

¹ Orat. xii.

Bishop of Cæsarea, dying, S. Basil was elected to the vacant See ; a matter in which both the Bishop of Nazianzum and his son Gregory took an active part, so that it might almost be considered their work. The new Bishop vainly sought to induce the friend and companion of his insignificance and solitude to share likewise his elevation.

Gregory shrunk still more from the proposed office of episcopal Coadjutor than he had previously done from that of Priest.

“I was delighted,” (he writes to Basil,) “to find you seated on the high throne, and to see the victory of the Spirit in lifting up a light upon its candlestick, which even before did not shine dimly. Could I be otherwise, seeing the general interests of the Church so depressed, and needing a guiding hand like yours? However I did not hasten to you at once, nor will I; you must not ask it of me. First, I did not from delicacy towards your own character, that you might not seem to be collecting your partizans about you with indecency and heat, as objectors would say; next, for my own peace and reputation. Perhaps you will say, ‘When then will you come? and till when will you delay?’ Till God bids, till the shadows of opposition and jealousy are passed. And I am confident it cannot be long. . . .”¹

¹ Epist. xxiv.

Basil was hurt at his friend's refusal; himself of a sterner, more resolute and vigorous cast of mind he considered it selfish to allow any natural timidity or shrinking, and love of peace and retirement to interfere with the great cause of the Church's welfare. This was the first step towards that breach of friendship which was so bitter a trial to the two holy men. Shortly after a monk of Nazianzum calumniated Basil, and Gregory wrote to inquire concerning the matter. Basil again was wounded, that one who had so intimately known his whole heart and soul, should deem any inquiries needful; and in his reply, he says, "I know what has led to all this, and have urged every topic to hinder it; but now I am weary of the subject, and will say no more about it—I mean our little intercourse. For had we kept our old promise to each other, and had due regard to the claims which the Churches have on us, we should have been the greater part of the year together Let me persuade you to come here and assist my labours Perhaps in a short time, by God's Grace, I shall be able to refute my slanderers by my deeds, for it seems likely that I shall soon have to suffer somewhat for the truth's sake more than usual; the best I can expect is banishment. Or if this hope fails, after all CHRIST'S Judgment seat is not far distant."¹

¹ Basil. Epist. lxxi.

The crowning act of estrangement followed A.D. 372. It arose thus: Cappadocia had until this time been one entire province both in ecclesiastical and civil government, but now the Emperor Valens divided it into two; making Tyana the chief city of one province, as Cæsarea was of the other. Upon this Anthimus, Bishop of Tyana, asserted his right as metropolitan of the second division. Basil deemed himself bound to the Church whose spouse he was, to maintain her rights; and as the most effectual means of checking the arrogant pretensions of Anthimus, he created several new bishoprics within the disputed territory. To one of these, Sasima by name, he appointed Gregory. No measure could possibly have been more unwelcome to the Nazianzen Priest. He had the most profound dislike and dread of dignities, tumult, confusion, an elevated position, its cares and responsibilities. He had always told Basil that whenever the claim to which he now yielded, (namely his father's age and infirmities which required his assistance,) should be ended by death, he would instantly forsake the world's distractions and retire to his ardently desired solitude. He counted himself unfit and unworthy the episcopal office—he dreaded the charge, and his soft retiring spirit sickened at the idea of being thrust into it. Nor did he ever change his opinion. To the last Gregory main-

tained that his consecration was an error, and that from it arose all the tumultuous cares of his after life. However, he was over-ruled by Basil, whose resolution was seconded by the venerable Bishop of Nazianzum, who in no degree partook of his son's opinion as regarded his own incompetency for the mitre. Accordingly at last Gregory was consecrated by Basil, and he went however reluctantly to Sasima. He found it a most unattractive spot—"A miserable little village on the high road, situate where three roads meet, devoid alike of water and verdure, and perpetually disturbed by the noise and dust of traffic. Nought is to be heard save clamour, murmurs, and groans; nought seen save exaltations, sentences, and executions. The inhabitants are either strangers or the very scum of the earth. In short, it would be impossible to find a more wretched place, or one less worthy of a free man than Sasima."¹

Anthimus disputed Gregory's possession even of this undesirable spot, and after some few efforts to retain it, not very heartily made perhaps, he considered himself freed from his unwelcome office and took his departure, retiring to a mountain solitude far more congenial to his taste. Basil would doubtless have acted differently—he would have endured and striven, laboured and wrought, and nothing but

¹ Carm. i.

actual violence would have driven him from the post to which he deemed himself called by God; but the two were as we have already seen, of widely different characters, and Gregory's conduct was consistent with his.

But it was not God's Will to allow His servant to seek for rest, real tangible rest on earth. In his youth Gregory had sincerely uttered the prayer: "Draw me, I will run after Thee;"¹ and though it might be with him as with many others who have in sincerity breathed some such prayer, that they "knew not what they asked;" God knew; and His Wise and Loving Hand drew him on and on irresistibly. It had first drawn Gregory from the fascinations of worldly knowledge and science, then from his peaceful solitude, then to the priesthood, farther still to the episcopacy; and now it would not let him rest in a selfish indulgence of tranquillity. The call came through a voice to which he had never refused to hearken, that of his father, who knowing well whom he had to deal with, and the best manner of conquering his repugnance to assume any office, now urged his desire to obtain Gregory for his own coadjutor in the way most likely to move him. "Son," he said, "your own father is become your petitioner, an aged father to a youthful son; a master to one by God's decree

¹ Cant. i. 4.

under him. I do not seek riches or honor for you—all I ask is that like Aaron and Samuel you will consent to minister before the LORD. Do not despise the intreaties of him to whom you owe your existence; be indulgent to your aged father in this his most reasonable request, and remember how long a life I have spent myself in ministering as I would have you do. Unless you grant me this petition, not you but some stranger's hand shall close my eyes, and lay my body in the grave. My life is very near its end; do you smooth its last steps, and then pursue your own will."

Not many could have resisted such an appeal, least of all one so peculiarly sensitive and tender as was Gregory, and so devotedly attached to his parents. He yielded, making it a clear stipulation that he was not to be counted on as his father's successor, but should only bear the weight of the episcopal office during the elder Gregory's lifetime.

This was no very long period. The venerable Bishop who had for long been extremely infirm, and suffering almost continual pain,¹ for which he

¹ "There was scarce any time that he was not distressed from suffering, in frequent attacks during the day, and sometimes even in an hour—it was in the service only that he received strength and the suffering gave way, as though it had been put to flight by command. So after having lived near one hundred years, thus passing beyond David's limits to our

found no alleviation, save in the Blessed Sacrament, (which he continued to celebrate to the very last), died at length, after a life extending to almost one hundred years ; during forty-five of which he had exercised the episcopal office. He died in an attitude of prayer, his last words being addressed to God Whom he had served so long. How deep and sincere his son's grief was may be best seen by his own words speaking the funeral oration.

“ We,” he says, (speaking of himself and the flock deprived of their Chief Pastor,) “ have all but taken our departure with him, and are ill at ease in the place of our affliction, having lost that experienced pilot, or rather that lamp of our life, by looking to which we kept our course aright, as it lighted us from on high in the way of salvation. Dost thou seek” (he is addressing S. Basil who had come to Nazianzum) “ him who has departed with every good thing, and with all that fair pastoral discipline, which after many years he had gathered, full at once of days and of wisdom, and crowned with the glory of old age, if it be allowed to apply the saying of Solomon ? Or dost thou seek the destitute and

time, and of these forty-five in the priesthood, almost the measure of human life, he so departed in a good old age. And how ? with the very words and attitude of prayer, leaving behind no trace of wickedness, and very many memorials of virtue.”—Orat. xviii.

dejected flock, to see how full it is of despondency and grief, no longer taking rest in the place of pastures nor nurtured beside the waters of refreshment, but seeking precipices and desert places and depths, among which it will be scattered and perish?"¹

Speaking of his father's exceeding gentleness, Gregory says, "In S. Stephen and in my father nothing was so remarkable as their ignorance of evil. For he, when in peril of his life hated not them that cast at him; but while they were stoning him prayed for them that stoned him as a disciple of CHRIST, for Whose cause it was his to suffer, therein offering to GOD something greater than his death, i.e. his long suffering. And in respect to my father there was no interval between reproving and forgiving, so that through the quickness of his pardoning the pain (of reproof,) was almost taken away. . . . Rather might the dew sustain the sun's rays, as they strike upon it in the morning, than any remnant of passion abide in him."²

The breach between the two friends was forgotten in this season of sorrow, and in spite of his many and grievous infirmities Basil hastened to comfort his mourning friend. Their hearts could never be dissevered, whatever outward circumstances might arise; and indeed now Basil was the

¹ Orat. xviii.

² Ibid.

only remaining object of love to Gregory's warm and loving heart, for the pious Nonna survived her husband but a short time, and Gregory remained alone in the world as far as personal and private affection was concerned.

The bravest, most self-devoted heart must feel such earthly isolation, since God has placed so strong a capacity for clinging earthly affections within us—and surely the Angels hovering round did not rebuke the tears Gregory shed over those with whom he had lived so long, and fondly hoped hereafter to live for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

. . . "I should ill become this throne, O peers,
And this imperial sovereignty, adorn'd
With splendour, armed with power, if aught proposed,
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape
Of difficulty or danger, could deter
Me from attempting."

Paradise Lost, Bk. ii.

GREGORY REMAINS AT NAZIANZUM.—HIS ILL HEALTH.—
DEATH OF S. BASIL.—TROUBLES OF THE CHURCH.—GRE-
GORY IS CALLED TO CONSTANTINOPLE.—INTERNAL COM-
MOTIONS.—THEODORUS.—MAXIMUS THE CYNIC.—COUN-
CIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE.—ITS OBJECTS.—DEPARTURE OF
GREGORY.—HIS FAREWELL.—RETURNS TO NAZIANZUM.—
HIS DEATH.

NEW difficulties were brought upon Gregory by the death of his father, and new contests with his reluctance to remain in a post of responsibility. No intention could be more genuine or sincere than his to retire from the charge of his father's diocese, directly that father's death set him free from his engagement. But it was inevitable that he would not be allowed to depart without hindrance. All his friends were unanimous in urging upon him the importance of

his abiding at the post he had been guarding against the Church's foes ; they besought him to remember how great hurt might arise were the see to be left vacant, the flock without a pastor, exposed to the assaults of evil men and heretics ; and their unanswerable arguments induced him to remain at Nazianzum, not however without a strong protest on his part, addressed to the Bishop, that he remained only as provisionary Bishop until they should appoint some one to the see, which he earnestly besought them to do without delay.

It is of some importance to take note of this fact, since later on one of the pleas for depriving S. Gregory of the see of Constantinople was, that he was already Bishop of Nazianzum, and that his translation was against the canons of the Church.

His feeble health made this continued charge a great undertaking. From an early period he had suffered from continual indisposition, a circumstance which no doubt contributed to foster his disinclination for an active life. "I am afflicted with illness," he writes to a sick friend, "and I rejoice therein, not because of my affliction, but because I am enabled to set the example of patience to others ; for never being free from suffering, I at least gain this benefit from my infirm condition, that I can bear it patiently, and thank God alike for the pains He sends me, and the alle-

viations, inasmuch as I know that Divine Wisdom orders nothing concerning us without a good end, although we see it not."¹ However, in spite of bodily weakness, and spiritual reluctance, Gregory fulfilled the duties of his post with faithfulness and zeal, giving heed both to the temporal and spiritual wants of the people, not neglecting meanwhile frequently to remind the Catholic Prelates, that he only waited for them to appoint a Bishop of Nazianzum, and set him free. But this appointment they failed to make, and at last, wearied out with expectation, and counting himself through bodily ailments quite unfit to attend to the duties incumbent on him, Gregory departed from Nazianzum, and retired to Seleucia. Here he was not destined to enjoy real repose more than in any other place, for the Arian heresy, then at its climax of power, strangely perplexed and persecuted the orthodox. We learn nothing concerning Gregory's pursuits while at Seleucia, beyond that he shared in his brethren's sufferings.

A sorrow was in store for him, and for the whole Church, in the death of S. Basil, who after long illness and prostration of body, though with unimpaired vigour of mind, entered into his rest on January 1st, A.D. 379. We must let Gregory speak for himself concerning that friend, not now

¹ Epist. lxi.

the less deeply mourned that some clouds had lowered upon their friendship and love.

“Who so grey as he in understanding, even before he was grey-headed? for by this does Solomon define old age. Who so respected, whether among the aged or the young, not simply of our own time, but of those also who lived long ago? Who less needed words, because of his character, but who more richly gifted with them along with it? In what branch of learning was he not a proficient, or rather was he not so distinguished as though in that one alone? For he mastered every department better than others; and each so thoroughly, as though he had applied to no other. For in him pains and ability were united, which make arts and sciences effective. No man less needed natural quickness because of his application, no man application less, because of his quickness, and in such degree did he combine both, that it was doubtful for which of them he was more remarkable.”¹

Then the variety and depth of his attainments is illustrated with respect to rhetoric, grammar, philosophy, logic, astronomy, geometry, &c.:

“But what are these things compared to his skill in eloquence, and to the power of his teaching, by which he brought the utmost parts of the world

¹ Orat. xliii. 23.

to agreement? As yet we are occupying ourselves at the foot of the mountain, far away from its summit. We are as yet but traversing a strait, while we are leaving the deep and vast ocean. For I suppose, if ever there was, or ever shall be a trumpet, which should pierce the skies above, or voice of God compassing the universe, or shaking of the world by some new and marvellous method, all these would his voice and intellect be, as far outstripping and overtopping all others, as do we the nature of irrational creatures. Who ever more thoroughly purified himself for the SPIRIT, or prepared himself more fitly to declare heavenly things? Who ever was more enlightened with the light of knowledge, or so dived into the depths of the SPIRIT, or so with God contemplated the things of God? Who ever had [a power of] language more suitable for expressing his thoughts, so as not to break down in either of the ways so common, through ideas which cannot find expression, or expression that cannot keep pace with the ideas? For in both respects he maintained a high reputation, being always equal to himself and thoroughly well adapted. To search out all things, even the deep things of God, is what is witnessed of the SPIRIT, not as though He knew not, but to express his delight in the contemplation. And by him (Basil) were all things of the SPIRIT searched out,

whereby he could instruct every sort of character, and teach lofty speech, and turn men's minds from present things and transfer them to heavenly."¹

"Let then, the whole body, as well of the priestly as of the inferior orders, those of our own brethren and foreigners, come here and join with me in the voice of praise, each one seeking out and setting forth some different one of his noble qualities. Let rulers set him forth as a legislator ; politicians, as a statesman ; men of the people, his moderation ; men of letters, as their teacher ; maidens, as the bridesman ; those who are under the yoke, as a moderator ; solitaries, as one who gave them wings ; monks, as a judge ; the simple, as a guide ; theologians, as a divine ; the high spirited, as their bridle ; the afflicted, as their consolation ; old age, as a staff ; youth, as an instructor ; poverty, as a supplier of their wants ; wealth, as a dispenser of it. Widows, too, if I mistake not, will bless their protector ; orphans, their father ; the poor, one who loved them ; strangers, one given to hospitality ; brethren, one who loved the brethren ; the sick, a physician, whatever the disease, or remedy (required) ; the healthy, the guardian of their health ; and all, him who became all things to all, that he might gain all, or as many as he could."²

¹ Orat. lxxv.

² Orat. lxxx.

At this time the Arian heresy, that great enemy of the Faith, was at its fullest strength in Constantinople, and threatened well nigh to overthrow all orthodoxy, and set up its polluted banner in unmolested triumph. The pious Bishop Alexander died A.D. 336 (shortly after the miserable death of Arius), and his successor, Paul, after vainly endeavouring to stem the torrent of heresy, was overthrown, and finally murdered by the Arians, into whose hands the church of Constantinople then fell. Grievous were the sufferings and indignities which the widowed Church endured under Eusebius and Eudoxius, Arian chiefs. In the year 370, the Catholics attempted to re-assert their position, and elected a Bishop, Evagrius, but Valens came to the rescue of his heretical friends, banished Evagrius, appointed Demophilus, "the prince of perfidy," as he was styled, and when eighty ecclesiastics came to him with a petition against the cruelties they underwent at the hands of Demophilus, sent them out to sea and caused them all to be burnt with the vessel. Nor were the Arians sole persecutors of the Faith in Constantinople: the Novatians, the Macedonians, the Apollinarists, and Eunomians all reared their viper heads within the unfortunate city, and if they agree in nothing else, bad men and heretics are sure to unite in persecuting CHRIST's faithful people. In truth, the Faith had

well-nigh perished amid this sea of troubles, and yet not altogether. There was still a little remnant left, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; a flock feeble in numbers, but strong in faith, ready to say with the Prophet Habakkuk: "I will watch to see what the LORD will say unto me; . . . though He tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, their souls which are lifted up are not upright in them: but the just shall live by faith."

Few indeed and feeble were the little flock in the sight of men, without a pastor, or fold, wandering sadly amid the mountains and caves, and exposed to perils without number. But in God's Sight they were precious, and when He had purified and refined them, even as silver in the fire, He in His Mercy was pleased to turn events more favorably to them.

In January, 379, Theodosius became Emperor, and new hopes were kindled in the hearts of the faithful. By the Council of Antioch, held just before, and by the desire of all who were zealously defending the Church, S. Gregory was called upon to go to Constantinople, and undertake the defence and government of that important post. At first he refused decidedly, but after a time the vigorous remonstrances and solicitations of his friends, and of the Catholics in Constantinople,

prevailed; and once more Gregory forsook his prized solitude, to enter upon the heavy cares of the episcopacy.

Accordingly he went to Constantinople, as he describes himself, a poor unknown stranger, bent with age and sickness, worn out with tears and hardship; and yet strong in faith and ready to grapple bravely with God's foes. He was received into the house of a kinsman, and so predominant was the heretical party that at first the Catholics did not venture upon more than private assemblies in this place. By degrees however it became one of the greatest and most beautiful Churches in the city, known as Anastasia, or the Resurrection; since there the dead body of Catholicity had first revived.¹

The historian Sozomen likewise assigns another reason for the name Anastasia, namely, that one day during public worship a pregnant woman having fallen from the upper story, and being killed, she was restored to life upon the prayers of Gregory and the congregation.

In this church Gregory ministered and preached indefatigably, labouring to restore some order to the scattered and harassed flock. One internal difficulty against which he had specially to contend was the loose habit acquired by all, men and women,

¹ Sozomen, vii. 5.

young and old, of canvassing and discussing all the most solemn and sacred mysteries of religion lightly and without reverence, as though such subjects were of no more weight than any other, political or scientific which excited public attention. This evil was fostered by the Eunomians, who presumed so far as to believe themselves capable of penetrating even the hidden secrets of the Deity. Every place of public resort, says S. Gregory,¹ resounded with their profane discussions and disputes, and the most unfit persons argued and decided without a blush. Gregory earnestly assured the people that they should indeed be ever *thinking* of God, and that thought should more and more purify every corner of their heart, every word and deed; but the attempt to pry into that which He in His Wisdom has concealed, and the careless irreverent mention of His Name on all occasions, he condemned, as profane and dangerous.

Meanwhile he himself preached energetically concerning the faith, and his orations on the Blessed Trinity, won for him the title of Theologos. His eloquence, as we have already seen was great, and multitudes both of the orthodox and heretics flocked to hear him. The crowd could not find admittance, although they pressed into the very choir whence he spoke, and as later S. Chrysostom's, his words

¹ Orat. xxxiii.

were received with cries of applause and loud clapping of hands. Yet Gregory's preaching was not calculated to win the multitude; he was not like the false prophets who cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. "I am neither entertaining nor brilliant," he says, speaking of the eagerness with which the people hearkened to him, "neither am I suited to win men's affection by flatteries and smooth sayings, as I see some exercising the sacred functions of the priesthood do. They have made piety and the Christian religion which naturally are simple and free from disguise, into an art. They have introduced the manners of the bar and the theatre into the sanctuary But God is my Witness that such is not my habit. I may rather be accused of excessive simplicity and coarseness, than of flattery and unworthy complaisance. I deal sharply with my best friends if they act contrary to what is right and their duty."¹

It is no new thing for men one day, nay even one hour to cry, "They are Gods!" and the next to stone those objects of their admiration, and so the people of Constantinople treated Gregory. He was stoned, his ministrations interrupted with violence and bloodshed, and he himself was dragged before the Prefect. Indeed his whole career at Constantinople was but a series of troubles, both

¹ Orat. xxvii.

from heretics and the orthodox. Gregory however was not appalled, saying, that if his enemies possessed the visible temples, he had the living Temple, and that GOD Who is LORD over it; if they had silver and gold, he had pure doctrine; if his flock was but small, it was so much the easier to tend, and that he was confident of its speedy enlargement, and that many now numbered among the wolves, would become true sheep, and even perhaps be wise and pious pastors.¹

Internal troubles however were more grievous to Gregory than any from without. There was a certain Cynic philosopher, by name Maximus, an Alexandrian by birth, and a man of most licentious and infamous life, a thorough adventurer, who coming to Constantinople, and making great professions, even so far as to call himself a confessor of the faith, completely imposed upon the mild unsuspecting Gregory, and gained his favor, being admitted without reserve to his house, his table, and his society. Meanwhile Maximus was forwarding his wicked designs; he had a confederate in one of Gregory's own Priests, and deceiving Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, in like manner as he had deceived Gregory, that prelate was induced to second him. Some Egyptian Bishops came to Constantinople, and one night, while Gregory was laid up

¹ Orat. xxv.

with sickness, the party suddenly broke into his church, and attempted to enthrone Maximus. The ecclesiastics belonging to the church succeeded however in driving them away, and the popular indignation was greatly kindled against Maximus. He was dismissed the city, and the Catholics gathered round Gregory in an attitude of defence. But he was deeply moved at the desertion of his traitor Priest and other of his friends, and finding that the Egyptian party had completed the ordination of Maximus in a private house, he resolved to depart from Constantinople, not being yet formally established as its Bishop.¹ The people however finding out his intention, besought him so fervently to remain, intreating him not to abandon them in their need, and urging that with him the pure faith of the Blessed TRINITY would depart out of their city, that they prevailed. It was about this period that among those who eagerly profited by the venerable Bishop's instructions was found no less a person than the great S. Jerome, who counted it no small honor to have sat at Gregory's feet.

The Emperor Theodosius sent an edict to Constantinople in the year 380, by which he commanded that the Catholic faith alone should be endured, and all heresies visited with civil and religious penalties; but finding the city still greatly disturbed on

¹ Socrates, v. 7.

visiting it some little time afterwards, in the beginning of the following year he published a fresh edict, to this effect :

“Let no place be allowed to heretics for the holding their religious assemblies, no occasion permitted for the exercising of their madness and obstinacy. Be it known to all, that although this sort of men may have fraudulently procured some special rescript in their favor, such rescript shall be of no force. Let all such heretical assemblies be prohibited and dispersed. Let the Name of the One Only and most high God be celebrated in all places ; and the Nicene faith delivered long since by our ancestors, and confirmed by the testimony and assertion of our divine religion, be had in perpetual observance. Let the defilement of the Photinian blemish, the venom of the Arian sacrilege, the falsehood and perfidy of Eunomius, and the abominable prodigies of sects, together with the monstrous names of their authors, be banished even from common hearing. But he only is to be accounted an assertor of the Nicene faith, and a true professor of the Catholic religion, who confesses God Almighty, and JESUS CHRIST the Son of God, One in Name, God of God, Light of Light ; who does not through denial, do violence to the HOLY SPIRIT, by Whom we receive what we hoped for from the Hands of our Heavenly FATHER ; and

who according to the tenor of the sound and orthodox faith, maintains the undivided Substance of the most Perfect Trinity, which by a Greek term right believers call *οὐσία*. These are the doctrines which we approve, and which are to be entertained with veneration. Whoever adhere not to these, let them cease by crafty affectations to entitle themselves to the name of the true religion, a name that belongs not to them, and let them be publicly known by their own infamous appellations; and since we prohibited all sorts of heretics from holding their unlawful assemblies within towns or cities, let them be utterly removed out of all churches. And if hereupon the faction shall forcibly attempt anything, we command that with all rigour they be banished out of all cities, that so the Catholic Churches throughout the world may be restored to all orthodox Bishops that hold the Nicene faith. Given at Constantinople, the fourth of the Ides of January, Eucherius and Syagrius being Consuls."

Theodosius utterly condemned Maximus, who finding himself banished from Constantinople, took refuge at Alexandria, where he began to try a similar course towards his former friend, the Bishop Peter. But the civil power banished him as a disturber of the public peace, and thus terminated his notorious and inglorious career.

Theodosius, on his entry into Constantinople,

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received Gregory with great respect, embracing him, and saying: "It is God's Will to give you this church through my means. The whole town is keenly excited, and asks for you so earnestly, that nothing could set aside their request; the people seem as though they would have resort to violence in order to constrain me to further their desire, but they know that I need no great pressing to fulfil it."

His next step was to propose the Nicene Creed to Demophilus, the Arian Bishop, and on his refusing it, to deprive him of all churches in the city. A great tumult arose among the Arians upon this, and the disturbance was so considerable, that the Emperor and his troops were obliged to conduct Gregory through the crowded streets to the church. His bodily infirmities were at that time so great that he could scarcely move, but his eyes were steadfastly gazing upwards, and his mind so filled with holy thoughts, that he scarce was conscious what was passing around him. A circumstance that happened on this occasion had a powerful effect on the people's mind. The day was gloomy, and the sun shrouded in heavy clouds, whereat the heretics kept exclaiming that it was a sign of God's Wrath, and His displeasure towards their foes. But just as Theodosius and Gregory entered the choir, and the psalm of thanksgiving was raised, the sun broke

through its surrounding clouds, so that the whole church became suddenly lighted up brightly, filling all the faithful with gladness. So great was the general excitement, that all, men and women, rich and poor, began eagerly calling upon Theodosius to confirm Gregory as their Bishop. The tumult waxed greater and greater; Gregory himself was altogether unnerved, and wholly unable to speak, but he caused one of his attendant Priests to address the people, and remind them that their conduct was unseemly, for that they had come thither only to give thanks to God for His Mercies vouchsafed to them. The commotion was thus appeased. The Emperor put Gregory into possession of the episcopal house and revenues, and a few days later the people forced him into the episcopal throne.

How little in tone with his natural inclination all this excitement and division was, we need hardly pause to prove. "Members of CHRIST's Body," he exclaims, addressing some of those who had forsaken the true faith, "members ever dear to me, although now corrupt, how have you scattered yourselves abroad? how scattered others? how have you raised altar against altar? how have you destroyed yourselves? how committed suicide by your separation? what affliction have you caused us? . . . Oh, Israel, who shall recal your corruptions? with what ointment shall I close your sore?

how bind this so grievous and gaping wound? what prayers can I find to draw you from the depths of this calamity into which you have plunged yourselves? will this fervent supplication do it? Holy, Adorable, and Perfect TRINITY, Whom we worship and set forth ceaselessly, Thou Alone canst repair this grievous ill; Thou Alone effect this mighty work. Vouchsafe to restore those who have separated from us, and may they learn to love and preserve peace and unity. And for ourselves, after the labours and sorrows of this life, grant that we may attain the fulness of those heavenly joys, the possession of which is not marred by either discord or division.”¹

Yet that there was no cowardice in his exceeding love of peace is sufficiently clear—to quote his own words: “Through the HOLY SPIRIT I speak with perfect confidence. If I am not to suffer for my words, thanks be to GOD; but if my freedom of speech brings down suffering upon me, still thanks be to Him. Thanks be to Him if He spares my enemies from the guilt of this sin; and thanks be to Him if He vouchsafes me to sanctify and crown my labours in the Word by shedding of my blood.”²

Gregory’s manner of life was simple as ever—his Pontic solitude could hardly have furnished a more ascetic rule than did the luxurious city of Constan-

¹ Orat. xxviii.

² Orat. xlv.

tinople—he shunned all society, save that in which he was constrained to appear officially. His nights were chiefly spent in communion with God, or in chanting psalms; he never missed celebrating the Blessed Sacrament, therein offering himself to God, uniting his sufferings to those of CHRIST. Gregory's sufferings were great, as we have already seen, but one source of consolation he found in them was, that they enabled him the better to minister comfort to his fellow sufferers; and it was with his own hand that he succoured the sick and needy. His greatest joy, he says, was to lie prostrate before God and bathe his face in tears intreating for Light. His perfect disinterestedness was shown in his administration of the Church's revenues, for he never was other than a poor man.

After the suppression made by Theodosius of the Arian party, they hired a man to murder Gregory. He was confined to bed with severe illness, but the people were permitted to come into his room, and there offer up their thanks to God for having given them the shepherd they so earnestly desired.

When all the rest were departed, one young man lingered behind, his countenance pale and haggard, and his clothes tattered. He stood at the foot of Gregory's bed, sighing and weeping. After some time, during which his overwhelming grief caused the mild prelate himself to weep, the

young man confessed that he had been hired as a murderer, but that God had saved him from so great guilt, by urging him to repent and confess his wickedness. As might be expected of one of his character, Gregory freely forgave him, only exhorting him to forsake his evil life and turn to the things of religion.¹

Gregory's public career was a short one. "In what a little time," (it has been well said,) "men move through the work which is, as it were, the end for which they are born, and which is to give a character to their names with posterity. They are known in history as the prime movers in this, or the instruments of that; as rulers, or politicians, or warriors; and when we examine dates, we often find that the exploits, or discoveries, or sway which make them famous, lasted but a few years out of a long life, like plants that bloom once, and never again. Their energy of existence, moral character, talents, acquirements, seems concentrated upon a crisis, and is invisible and silent in the world's annals, both before and after."

Just as Gregory seemed to be securely established in the See of Constantinople, he was put forth from it for ever. In the year 381, the Emperor Theodosius convened a council at Constantinople, with a view to restoring peace to the disturbed Church.²

¹ Carm. x.

² Sozomen, vii. 7. Socrates, v. 8.

Accordingly one hundred and fifty Catholic Prelates,¹ together with thirty-six Macedonian Bishops, assembled together, and this synod is historically known and recognized by the whole Catholic Church as the second general council. There were three especial points to be considered, and the first of these was the condemnation of Maximus in these terms: "Concerning Maximus the Cynic, and his insolence and irregularity committed at Constantinople, the Synod has decreed that Maximus neither is, nor ever was a Bishop, nor any of those truly ordained whom he advanced to any order of the Clergy, and that whatever was done in his ordination, or has been since done by him, is null and void." The next step was to confirm Gregory in the See, which was accordingly done with much dignity, the venerable Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, president of the council, performing the ceremony.

The second object of the council was to ratify and secure the Nicene Creed, and it was on this occasion that the confession of Faith bearing that name assumed its present form; the articles concerning the Third Person of the Blessed TRINITY being expanded as a safeguard against the heresies

¹ Among these were S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nyssen, and his brother S. Peter of Sebaste, and many other names honored and revered by the Church in all ages.

then rife. The third matter of consideration was the necessity for sundry rules of discipline in the Church's internal polity, and among others, a canon was passed to this effect: "Let the Bishop of Constantinople have the precedence or privilege of honor after the Bishop of Rome, forasmuch as Constantinople is New Rome."

So far matters had gone on tolerably well, under the skilful guidance of Bishop Meletius, whose prevailing characteristic seems to have been mildness and a capacity for reconciling his more intemperate brethren.¹ But in the midst of the council this venerable Prelate was taken to his rest, and immediately the storm began to break forth. A contest arose as to who should fill his place and lead the council. Gregory endeavoured to preserve peace, and would fain have had Paulinus (who had been also ordained to the See of Antioch) preside during the remainder of the council. But a violent disturbance arose, both eastern and western Prelates opposed Gregory—on all sides murmurs arose—some accused him of being guilty of a breach of the Canons in holding another See when he was already Bishop of Sasima and of Nazianzum—even the people who loved him greatly complained that he was too lenient to heretics, and that thereby he had brought evils upon the Church. Severity was

¹ Theodoret, v. 3.

not a part of his nature. "Consider," he says in reply,¹ "what is charged against me. 'So much time is passed,' they say, 'of your governing the Church, with the crisis in your favor, and the Emperor's influence so great a thing. What symptom of change is there? How many persecutors had we before? what misery did we not suffer? what insults, what threats, what exiles, what plunderings, what confiscations, what burnings of our Clergy at sea, what temples profaned with blood of saints, and for temples made charnel houses? What has followed? We have become stronger than our persecutors, and they have escaped.' So it is. For me it is enough of vengeance upon our injurers, to have the power of retaliation. But these objectors think otherwise; for they are very precise and righteous in the matter of reprisals, and therefore they claim what belongs to the opportunity. 'What Prefect,' they ask, 'has been punished? or people brought to their senses? or incendiaries? what fear of ourselves have we secured to us for the time to come?'"

Quite entering into the objections raised against them, and being (as he had surely ever been,) altogether without vain ambition, Gregory hastened to withdraw;² yet not altogether without a rebuke to those ambassadors of peace who, for-

¹ Orat. xxxii.

² Sozomen, vii. 7.

getful of their mission, were fomenting discord. "What a disgrace is it," he said, addressing the Council, "and how unbecoming such sage and reverend prelates, that you who teach other men peace, should yourselves thus fiercely contend with mutual animosities. It matters not what becomes of me, so this great assembly may but be at one in itself. Let this be your first care and business ; I am content to sacrifice my reputation, and to be accounted rude, blunt or ignorant, so you may agree. Nay, though I have been far enough from raising the storm, yet if it may save the ship, I am not better than the prophet Jonah, throw me into the sea, and let these storms and tempests cease. I am willing to go whithersoever ye will, and bear whatsoever ye will, if thereby I can but promote your concord. I would not have any laws violated for my sake ; I herein make a law to myself, not to account any thing hard or uneasy. I unwillingly accepted this throne, and now I willingly quit it. The craziness of my body reminds me of it. Death is a debt which I owe, and it must once be paid ; it is in God's Hand when He pleases to call for it. Farewell, dear brethren, and preserve a just memory of my pains and labours."

The ferment not abating, Gregory went to the Emperor, and kneeling down to kiss his hand,

said : "I come to proffer a petition ; not riches or treasures for myself, not costly ornaments for the Church, not honors or offices for my relations, these are but trifles, fit for narrow and contracted minds,—I aim at greater matters for myself. This is my prayer : that I may have permission to depart, and give place to the envious and evil-minded. If I like the episcopacy, it is a long way hence, for here I disgust my very friends, only because I value nought save God. I beseech you, among all the trophies and triumphs of your reign, let this be the greatest, your reducing them to concord and unity, whom if the fear of God will not, let your authority compel to lay down their arms. This is the last request of him, whom your majesty knows you placed against his will upon this episcopal throne."

His last step was to take leave of his people, in the presence of the whole assembled Council. For the last time he addressed them, saying :¹ "Look around, and see what is here. Look at this crown of glory, where once was shame only. Look at this reverend company of Priests, at these well ordered Deacons, at this array of readers : look at the eagerness of all the people, men and women, after knowledge—sublime knowledge, and thirst after the things of God, both small and great, the docility of men of high

¹ Orat. xxxii.

estate, the zeal for GOD's glory found in nobles, soldiers, and men of letters alike, all gentle and meek in other things, but quick and ardent in fighting for the HOLY SPIRIT, all clear and faithful worshippers of the Word. Look at the piety of our women, whether those who in married life still make GOD their first care, or those who being free from all earthly ties, consecrate themselves wholly to GOD. Look at the virtue of our youth, and at our old men living as becomes their age, striving after immortality, and renewing their strength daily in the hope of a better life. These make the crown which (unworthy before GOD) I have had my share in weaving, and some of them are my very own children, begotten in the SPIRIT by me. Have I," he further asks, "circumvented the people through covetousness, or as I see many do, sacrificed their interest to my own private gain? Have I at any time disturbed the Church? Whose ox or whose ass have I taken as the price of your souls, and have not kept my ministry pure and uncorrupt? If I have affected domination, or dignity, or have sought princes' courts, let that be my only portion, for if it were, I would soon rid myself of it. Let me have this as the reward of all my labours, to be delivered from my burden, and to enjoy my ease; look upon my grey hairs, and have respect to me as a stranger. Substitute another

in my room, a man strict and eloquent, and who may at once be fit to gratify you, and able to go through with the affairs of the Church, for such the necessities of this time do call for. You see in what a case I am, my body worn out with age, labour, and sickness ; little need have you of such a timorous and feeble old man as I am, dying daily through care and weakness, and who at this very time am scarce able to speak to you. Believe your guide, whom you were never wont to disbelieve ; I am weary, while my mildness and moderation are charged upon me as a fault ; I am weary, while I am forced to encounter with envy and rumour, and that not only from enemies, but friends, who wound more surely and deeply. . . . I beseech you by all that is dear and sacred, do me this kindness, to dismiss me with your prayers, let that be the reward of my conflicts and trials ; grant me a warrant for my discharge, as generals are wont to do to their old worn-out soldiers ; and let it be, if so please you, with an honorable acclamation at my exit ; if not, do your pleasure, it is a thing which I will not contend about, it is enough that God beholds and will regard my cause. And as for a successor, God will provide Himself with a pastor, as once He did a lamb for a burnt offering. I only beg this of you, that you would choose such a one as may be the object rather of men's envy than

their pity, who may not be ready basely to comply with every one upon all occasions, but willing to venture the favor and the frowns of men in the doing of what is just and true. The one course may be sweet at present, but the other will turn to account at a future day."

Perhaps the sharpest pang (and though he departed voluntarily, that is no sign that Gregory went pangless, indeed we have many proofs to the contrary,) was this separation from the visible Church he had reared, over which he had expended so many thoughts, hopes, and prayers, and where his ministrations had been fraught with so many blessings to the flock intrusted to his charge.

"Farewell, Anastasia!" he exclaims: "thou whose very name speaks piety! thou that gavest a new life to the Catholic doctrine, when buried under ignominy and contempt! Farewell, I say, thou seat of victory! thou Shiloh! into which we brought and fixed the Ark of God, after it had wandered up and down in the desert for forty years together. And thou great and venerable temple, the new inheritance, who owest the magnificence thou now enjoyest to the orthodox Faith, and whom of a Jebus we made a Jerusalem. And all the rest of you churches, that approach to it in splendour and beauty, and that like chains compass about and cement the several parts of the city;

which we, in the midst of all our weakness, enabled by Divine resistance, contemptible though we be, were wont to fill in our round of visitations. Farewell, apostles, the noble colony transplanted hither, leaders of my conflicts and sufferings! . . . Farewell, episcopal chair, thou dangerous though envied throne! Farewell, thou assembly of Bishops! venerable for your age and gravity; and all the rest of you that officiate at the holy table, and minister before God, Who is nigh unto them that draw nigh to Him. Farewell, the choirs of Nazarites, the harmonies, psalmodies, nocturnal stations, the modest virgins, grave matrons, crowds of widows and orphans, eyes of the poor always intent upon God and us! Farewell, all ye lovers of CHRIST and helpers of mine infirmities! Farewell, affectionate frequenters of my sermons, the crowds thronging to the church, the swift-handed scribes, and these rails so often pressed upon by my greedy auditors! Farewell, emperors, with your courts and courtiers! Farewell, great city, thou lover of CHRIST and His religion; for I will bear thee record that thou hast a zeal, but not according to knowledge: parting has rendered us more mutually kind! Embrace the truth, and at length change for the better; worship God oftener than you used to do; it is no dishonor to alter for the better, but to persist in a bad course is pernicious

and deadly. Farewell, east and west, for whom and by whom we are opposed and troubled, witness He that can make us quiet, if a few would but give way, and imitate my resignation; a thing that may be done without any considerable disadvantage, for they lose not God who desert their thrones, but secure to themselves a throne above, much more sublime and safe. But above and beyond all other things, I will cry, farewell angels, the tutelar guardians of this church, and both of my abiding and departure, so long as my affairs are in the Hands of God. Farewell, Trinity, my meditation and my ornament; mayest Thou be secured to them, and do Thou keep, and keep safely, this my people, (*mine* I call them still, though mine no longer,) and let me daily know how Thou art increased and advanced both by the doctrine and the life of Thy professors. Little children, keep that which I have committed unto you. Remember how I was stoned. The Grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST be with you all. Amen."

His last farewell spoken, Gregory hastened to quit the scene of so much turbulence and confusion, and return to the peaceful retirement which was not the less attractive to him through the dignity and elevation he quitted.

The Council proceeded to elect for his successor one Nectarius, a layman of high birth, remarkable

for his personal advantages, and for his gentleness and amiability of manner.¹ This gentleness, however, merged into weakness, and the episcopate of Nectarius was not a happy one for the See of Constantinople.

Gregory meanwhile returned to Nazianzum, where in spite of great bodily infirmities, he devoted himself to the service of the Church, in which the utmost confusion prevailed. His great object was to procure a Bishop for the vacant See, but both from within and from without every possible impediment was thrown in the way of this most desirable event.

Little more remains to narrate of his history: he was urged to join the prelates, who assembled at Constantinople the year following his resignation, but this Gregory absolutely declined to do. Self-mastery, and the victory over those infirmities to which he still knew himself exposed, seems to have been to the last one of his chief aims. The whole of one Lent he spent at Arianzus, in total silence, at once as a penance for past and guard against future sins of the tongue. Indeed, all his time there was spent in the most rigid penitential practices; his dwelling-place a solitary cavern, his garment the coarsest sackcloth, his couch of straw, even fire and shoes he counted as luxuries to be

¹ Soc. v. 8; Soz. vii. 8; Theod. v. 8.

abstained from, and hope in CHRIST his only consolation.

Thus passed the remainder of S. Gregory's life ; his pen was not inactive, a large number of epistles to various persons, and most of his poetic writings being the produce of this period. At last, the time having arrived for the ripe harvest to be gathered in, he, like a shock of corn come to its full time, entered into his rest. The precise date is uncertain, S. Jerome fixes it A.D. 389. No particulars concerning his departure have reached us. His will (made while yet at Constantinople) remains, and by it he leaves all his slender possessions to the Church of Nazianzum and its poor, only remembering the needs of some few who had served him faithfully.

And now, the stormy sea and all its billows past, he has gained the haven of rest. We are yet struggling, buffeted by the waves. May God in His Infinite Mercy give us grace to win our way, never quite overwhelmed ; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; and at last, may we win the same glad haven, and rest in eternal light and perpetual peace.

S. CYRIL.

BISHOP OF JERUSALEM.

“ From the archangel on heaven’s highest stair,
And seraphim and cherubim around,
Unto the lowest child of sin and care,
To each and all, as meet recipients found,
By nature’s works, or word, or Spirit’s seal,
’Tis CHRIST Alone the FATHER doth reveal.

“ Cyril, on Salem’s Apostolic throne,
Or where the humbler Catechist doth stand,
’Tis CHRIST in thee that takes each little one
Into His Arms, and leads him by the hand
Into the inner temple, fill’d with light,
And bathes in fountains of the Infinite.”

LIFE OF S. CYRIL.

“ Ye now made coheirs of glory,
Ye that sit with CHRIST on high,
Join to ours your supplications,
As for grace and peace we cry :

“ That this naughty life completed,
And its transient labours past,
Ours it may be to be seated
In our LORD's bright Home at last.”

S. CYRIL'S HISTORY LITTLE KNOWN.—HIS CATECHESIS.—CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM.—THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE.—S. CYRIL'S LECTURES.—HE IS CONSECRATED BISHOP OF JERUSALEM.—HIS LETTER TO THE EMPEROR.—DISSENSIONS WITH ACACIUS.—S. CYRIL DRIVEN FROM JERUSALEM.—HIS RESTORATION.—FUTILE ATTEMPTS OF THE JEWS TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE.—COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE.—DEATH OF S. CYRIL.

THE historian's task, with regard to this Father of the Church, is brief and unsatisfactory : little concerning him is to be told, and the greater part even of that little is veiled and obscured amid doubts and contradictory statements. Of his birth and parentage nothing is known beyond that the latter was Christian, and that the former took place in or

close to Jerusalem in the beginning of the fourth century. It is believed that he adopted the monastic life, but he must have been yet young when ordained to the Priesthood by Maximus, Bishop of Jerusalem. This Prelate was the successor of Macarius, who had consecrated him to another See, that of Diospolis; but his eminent virtues and strict orthodoxy (at that period a quality too rarely found), made him so dear to the people, that they urged his retention among themselves. He accordingly remained, acting as coadjutor to Macarius during his life, and succeeding to the episcopal throne upon his death.¹ Maximus intrusted to Cyril the important offices of preacher and catechist, and it is in this character that he comes specially before our notice, the only work of his remaining extant being the "Catechesis," a series of Catechetical lectures or sermons, which are important as illustrating both doctrine and discipline.

These lectures were delivered on the sacred spot of Golgotha itself;² for there the pious Emperor Constantine had erected a noble and beautiful church in commemoration of the solemn mysteries which for ever consecrated that ground. "He judged it incumbent on him," writes his biographer Eusebius, "to render the blessed locality of our

¹ Sozomen, ii. 20; Socrates, ii. 8.

² S. Cyril, Lect. xiv. 6.

SAVIOUR'S Resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that of a house of prayer; and this he did, not on the mere natural impulse of his own mind, but feeling his spirit directed thereto by the SAVIOUR Himself. For it had been in time past the endeavour of impious men, (or rather, let me say of the whole race of evil spirits through their means,) to consign to the darkness of oblivion that divine monument of immortality to which the radiant angel had descended from heaven, and rolled away the stone for those who still had stony hearts, and who supposed that the Living One still lay among the dead. . . . This sacred cave, then, certain impious and godless persons had thought to remove entirely from the eyes of men, supposing in their folly that thus they should be able effectually to obscure the truth. Accordingly they brought a quantity of earth from a distance, with much labour, and covered the entire spot; then, having raised this to a moderate height, they paved it with stone, concealing the holy cave beneath this massive mound. Then, as though their purpose had been effectually accomplished, they prepare on this foundation a truly dreadful sepulchre of souls, by building a gloomy shrine of lifeless idols to the impure spirit whom they call Venus, and offering detestable oblations therein on profane and ac-

cursed altars. For they supposed that their object could no otherwise be fully attained, than by thus burying the sacred cave beneath these foul pollutions. Unhappy men! they were unable to comprehend how impossible it was, that their attempt should remain unknown to Him Who had been crowned with victory over death, any more than the blazing sun when he rises above the earth, and holds his wonted course through the midst of heaven, is unseen by the whole race of mankind. . . . Nevertheless, these devices of impious and wicked men against the truth had prevailed for a long time, nor had any one of the governors, or military commanders, or even of the emperors themselves, ever yet appeared with ability to abolish these daring impieties, save only our prince, who enjoyed the favour of the King of kings. And now, acting under the guidance of His SPIRIT, he could not consent to see the sacred spot of which we have spoken thus buried, through the devices of the adversaries, under every kind of impurity, and abandoned to obscurity and neglect; nor yield to the wickedness of the perpetrator thereof, but invoking God his Helper, he gave orders that the place should be thoroughly purified, deeming it just, that what had been most polluted by the enemies, should receive the most special token of good through him. As soon then as his commands were

issued, these structures of falsehood were cast down from their proud eminence to the ground, and the whole edifice of error, with the statues and the evil spirits which they represented, were overthrown and utterly destroyed.

“ Nor did the Emperor’s zeal stop here ; but he gave further orders, that the materials of what was thus destroyed, both stone and timber, should be removed and thrown as far from the spot as possible ; and this command also was speedily executed. Still further, fired with holy ardour, he directed that the ground itself should be dug up to a considerable depth, and the soil which had been polluted by the foul impurities of demon worship, transplanted to a distant place. This also was accomplished without delay, but as soon as the original surface of the ground beneath the covering of earth appeared, immediately, contrary to all expectation, the venerable and hallowed monument of our SAVIOUR’S Resurrection was discovered. Then indeed did this most holy cave present a faithful similitude of His return to life, in that after lying buried in darkness, it again emerged to light, and afforded to all who came to witness the sight, a manifest proof of the wonders of which that spot had once been the scene, a testimony to the Resurrection of the SAVIOUR, clearer than any voice could give.

“After this the Emperor, by pious injunctions and ample supplies of money, commanded that a house of prayer worthy of the worship of God should be erected near the SAVIOUR’S tomb, on a scale of rich and royal magnificence. This object he had indeed for some time kept in view, and had foreseen, as if by the aid of a superior intelligence that which should afterwards come to pass. He laid his commands therefore, on the governors of the Eastern provinces, that by an abundant and unsparing expenditure they should secure the completion of the work on a scale of noble magnificence.”¹

After quoting Constantine’s letter to the Bishop of Jerusalem, (that Macarius already mentioned,) the historian continues to describe the church itself. “First of all, he adorned the sacred cave itself, as the chief part of the whole work, and the hallowed monument at which the Angel radiant with light had once declared to all that regeneration which was first manifested in the SAVIOUR’S Person. This monument therefore first of all, he adorned with rare columns, and profusely enriched with the most splendid decorations of every kind. The next object of his attention was a space of ground of great extent and open to the pure air of heaven. This he adorned with a pavement of finely polished stone, and inclosed it on three sides with porticos

¹ Eusebius, Life of Constant. book iii. chap. xxv. to xxx.

of great length. For at the side opposite to the sepulchre, which was the eastern side, the church itself was erected ; a noble work rising to a vast height, and of great extent, both in length and breadth. The interior of this structure was floored with marble slabs of various colours ; while the external surface of the walls, which shone with polished stones exactly fitted together, exhibited a degree of splendour in no respect inferior to that of marble. With regard to the roof, it was covered on the outside with lead, as a protection against the rains of winter. But the inner part of the roof, which was finished with sculptured fret work, extended in a series of connected compartments, like a vast sea, over the whole church, and being overlaid throughout with the purest gold, caused the entire building to glitter as it were with rays of light. Besides this were two porticos on each side, with upper and lower ranges of pillars, corresponding in length with the church itself, and these also had their roofs ornamented with gold. Of these porticos those which were exterior to the church were supported by columns of great size, while those within, rested on piles of stone, beautifully adorned on the surface. Three gates, placed exactly east, were intended to receive those who entered the church ; opposite these gates was the perfection of the whole work, the hemisphere,¹ which rose to

¹ The Apsis.

the very summit of the church. This was encircled by twelve columns, (according to the number of the Apostles of our SAVIOUR) having their capitals embellished with silver bowls of great size, which the Emperor himself presented as a splendid offering to his God. Next he inclosed the atrium which occupied the space leading to the entrances in front of the church. After these, reaching to the broad market-place, was placed the vestibule of exquisite workmanship, affording to the passers by on the outside a view of the interior which could not fail to inspire astonishment. This temple then, the Emperor erected as a conspicuous witness of the SAVIOUR'S Resurrection, and embellished it throughout on a scale of truly royal magnificence. He further enriched it with numberless offerings of inexpressible beauty, consisting of gold, silver, and precious stones, in various forms; the skilful and elaborate arrangement of which in regard to their magnitude, number, and variety, we have not leisure now to describe particularly."¹

Thus we see there were two churches, one the Anastasis, on the site of the holy Sepulchre—the other that called the Church of the Holy Cross, also the Martyrium or Testimony, being close to the scene of our LORD'S Passion—and the whole mount was known as Golgotha, although the summit where the Crucifixion actually took place was

¹ Life of Const. iii. xxxiii. to xli.

to the north of the churches.¹ S. Cyril preached in both these churches as he himself indicates, and we can well imagine how such a locality must have excited and kindled a fervour already deep and earnest. He is described as of middle height, pale, and with a large beard—and externally of a rough unpolished manner—but assuredly his language is not unpolished, and his bursts of sacred eloquence must have come with double force on that sacred spot whence he taught. Of the twenty-three lectures which alone remain to us of his writings, eighteen are addressed to candidates for Holy Baptism, and these are in fact chiefly an exposition of the Articles of the Christian Faith. He opens the first addressing the candidates in the following glowing terms: “Already is there on you the savour of blessedness, O ye who are soon to be enlightened, already are you gathering spiritual flowers to weave heavenly crowns withal; already hath the fragrance of the HOLY GHOST refreshed you; already are you at the entrance hall of the King’s house: may you be brought into it by the King. For now the blossoms of the trees have budded, may but the fruit likewise be perfected. Thus far, your names have been given in, and the roll-call made for service; these are the torches of the bridal train, and

¹ See a ground plan in the Oxford translation of S. Cyril’s Lectures.

the longings after heavenly citizenship, and a good purpose, and a hope attendant, for He cannot lie Who hath said, 'To them that love God, all things work together for good.'¹ God is indeed lavish in His benefits, yet He looks to each man's honest resolve; so the Apostle subjoins: 'To those who are called according to their purpose.' Honesty of purpose makes thee called, for though the body be here, yet if the mind be away, it avails nothing.'² "Let your mind," (he says further on,) "be refined as fire unto reverence, let your soul be forged as metal. Let the stubbornness of unbelief feel the anvil, let the superfluous scales drop off as of iron, and what is pure remain; let the rust be rubbed off, and the true metal be left. May God at length show you that night, that darkness which shows like day.'³ At that time to each man and woman among you may the gate of Paradise be opened; may you then enjoy the fragrant waters which contain CHRIST, may you then receive CHRIST's Name, and the efficacious power of divine things. Even now, I beseech you, lift up the eye of your understanding, imagine the angelic choirs, and God, the LORD of all sitting, and His Only-begotten SON sitting with Him on His Right Hand, and the Spirit

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

² Lect. i. 1.

³ Alluding to Easter Eve (the season of Holy Baptism) when lights were kept burning in the church all through the night.

with Them present, and thrones and dominions doing service, and each man and woman among you receiving salvation. Even now let your ears ring with the sound; long for that glorious sound, which, after your salvation, the Angels shall chant over you: 'Blessed are they whose iniquities have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered;'¹ when, like stars of the Church, you shall enter in it, bright in the outward man, and radiant in your souls.

"Great indeed is the Baptism which is offered you. It is a ransom to captives, the remission of offences, the death of sin, the regeneration of the soul, the garment of light, the holy seal indissoluble, the chariot to heaven, the luxury of paradise, a procuring of the kingdom, the gift of adoption. But a serpent by the wayside is watching the passengers; beware lest he bite thee with unbelief; he sees so many receiving salvation, and seeks to devour some of them. Thou art going to the FATHER of Spirits, but thou art going past that serpent; how then must thou pass him? 'Have thy feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,'² that even if he bite, he may not hurt thee. Have faith indwelling, strong hope, a sandal of power, wherewith to pass the enemy, and enter the presence of thy LORD. Prepare thine own heart to receive doctrine, to

¹ Acts ii. 47.

² Eph. vi. 15.

have fellowship in holy mysteries. Pray more often, that God may make thee worthy of the heavenly and immortal mysteries. Let neither day be without its work, nor night, but when sleep fails thine eyes, at once abandon thy thoughts to prayer. And shouldest thou find any shameful, any base imagination rising, reflect upon God's judgment, to remind thee of salvation. Give up thy mind to sacred studies, that it may forget wicked things. . . .

"We indeed as men charge and teach these things; for you, see that you make not our building hay and stubble and chaff, that we may not suffer loss, our work being burnt; but make our work gold and silver and precious stones. It is for me to speak, but thine to second me, and God's part to perfect. Let us nerve our minds; let us brace up our souls; let us prepare our hearts; the race is for our soul, our hope about eternal things. God is able, Who knows your hearts, and perceives who is sincere, and who is a hypocrite, both to preserve the sincere, and to give faith to the hypocrite; nay, even to the unbeliever, if he give Him but his heart. And may He blot out the handwriting that is against you, and grant you forgiveness of your former trespasses; may He plant you in the church, and enlist you for Himself, putting on you the armour of righteousness! And may He fill you with the heavenly things of

the New Testament, and give you the indelible seal of the HOLY SPIRIT, throughout all ages, in CHRIST JESUS our LORD, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."¹

After this introductory lecture, S. Cyril goes through a regular course of all that is most important for a Christian to "know and believe for his soul's health," beginning with the power of repentance for the remission of sin. What is sin? he supposes the disciple to ask. "Is it a living thing—an angel—an evil spirit? What is this which works in us? It is no foe from without, O man, wrestling against thee; but a shoot of evil taking its increase from thyself. . . . Remember the judgment, . . . and no unrighteousness shall prevail in thee. But when thou forgettest God, forthwith thou beginnest to devise wickedness, and to accomplish unrighteousness. . . . The devil prompts all, yet he prevails only over those who listen to him. . . . Shut thy door, and keep him far from thee, and he shall not hurt thee. . . . Perhaps thou sayest, I am a believer, lust does not gain the ascendant over me, even though my mind dwells on the objects of it. Knowest thou not that even a rock is cleft at length by a root which for a long time adheres to it? Admit not the seed, for it will break in pieces the faith; root out the mis-

¹ I. 15, 16, 17.

chief, ere it blossom, lest by being idle at the beginning, thou have the trouble of axes and fire afterwards. When thine eyes first ail, attend to them in time, lest after thou art blinded thou begin to seek the physician.”¹

S. Cyril then brings forward numerous illustrations of sin and repentance from the Holy Scriptures—and then proceeds to speak of Holy Baptism, the reward of repentance. “JESUS,” he says, “sanctified Baptism, being Himself baptized. Since the SON of GOD was baptized, what religious man can despise Baptism? He however was baptized, not to receive forgiveness of sins, for He was sinless; but being sinless to grant divine grace and dignity to the baptized. Since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise shared the same, that we, partaking of His Bodily Presence, might partake also of His Divine Grace; and so again JESUS was baptized, that through this also, we by participation, might with salvation receive dignity. . . . Life then encountered Him, that henceforth the mouth of death might be closed, that we the saved might all say, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ By Baptism the sting of death is destroyed.”²

The first of the fifteen Lectures following are on

¹ Lect. ii. 2, 3.

² Lect. iii. 11.

the ten points of faith, and they proceed, going regularly through the Creed. He speaks thus grandly of God in Unity; "If any take in hand to speak concerning God, first let him declare the bounds of the earth. Thou dwellest on the earth, and knowest not the limit of the earth which is thy dwelling; how then wilt thou be able worthily to think of its Creator? Thou beholdest the stars, but their Maker thou beholdest not: count the stars which are seen, and then set forth Him Who is not seen, 'Who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names.'¹ The pouring rains which lately came down on us, well nigh destroyed us: number the drops which fell in this city only,—nay, on thine own house in one hour, if thou canst; but thou canst not. Know thou thine own weakness, and thence know the Power of God; for 'by Him are numbered the drops of rain,'² which have been poured down on the whole earth, not only now, but ever. The sun is the workmanship of God, great indeed, yet but a spot in comparison of the whole of heaven; first gaze stedfastly on the sun, and then curiously scan his LORD. 'Seek not that which is deeper than thou, and that which is stronger than thee search not out, but what is appointed thee that consider.'³

¹ Ps. cxlvii.² Job xxxvi. 27, Sept.³ Eccles. iii. 21, 22. Lect. vi. 4.

“Truly,” he says again (alluding to various heretics), “Truly they ought to have been struck dumb, when they viewed the vaultings of the heavens and worshipped Him Who has reared the sky as an arch, Who out of the fluid waters has made the immoveable substance of the heavens. . . . What, is there not much to wonder at in the sun, which being small to look on, contains in it an intensity of power, appearing from the east, and shooting his light even to the west? The Psalmist describes his rising at dawn, when he says, ‘Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.’¹ This is a description of his pleasant and comely array on first appearing to men : for when he rides at high noon we are wont to flee from his blaze ; but at his rising he is welcome to all as a bridegroom to look on. Behold, also, how he proceeds (or rather not he, but One Who has by His bidding determined his course) ; . . . how likewise the days in order correspond to each other, as the Psalmist saith concerning them : ‘Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.’² For to the heretics who have no ears, they almost shout aloud, and by their order say that there is no other God save their Maker, and the Appointer of their bounds, Him Who laid out the universe, ‘Who is the Father of the rain, and Who hath

¹ Ps. xix. 5.

² Ps. xix. 2.

given birth to the drops of dew.’¹ Who hath condensed the air into clouds, and bid them carry the fluid mass of showers, at one time ‘bringing from the north golden clouds ;’² at another, giving them a uniform appearance, and then again curling them up into festoons and other figures manifold? ‘Who can number the clouds in wisdom?’ of which Job saith, ‘He knoweth the balancings of the clouds, and hath bent down the heaven to the earth ;’ and ‘He Who numbereth the clouds in wisdom ;’ and ‘The cloud is not rent under them.’³ For though measures of water ever so many weigh upon the clouds, yet they are not rent ; but with all order come down upon the earth. ‘Who brings the winds out of His treasures?’ ‘Out of whose womb cometh forth the ice?’—watery in its substance, but like stone in properties. And at one time the water becomes ‘snow like wool,’ at another it ministers to Him ‘Who scattereth the hoar frost like ashes ;’ at another it is changed into a strong substance, since ‘He fashions the water as He will.’ Its nature is uniform, its properties manifold. Water in the vines is wine, ‘which maketh glad the heart of man ;’ and in the olives oil ;’ to make his face to shine ;’ and is further transformed into bread, ‘which strengtheneth man’s heart,’ and into all kinds of fruits.

¹ Job xxxviii. 28, Sept.

² Job xxxvii. 22, Sept.

³ Job, Sept.

“And after all, I have not yet spoken of that part of His Wisdom which is not seen. Contemplate the spring and the flowers of all kinds, in all their likeness still diverse from one another: the deep crimson of the rose, and the exceeding whiteness of the lily. They come of one and the same rain, one and the same earth; who has distinguished, who has formed them? Now do consider this attentively;—the substance of the tree is one,—part is for shelter, part for this or that kind of fruit; and the Artificer is One. The vine is one, and part of it is for fuel, part for shoots, and part for leaves, and part for tendrils, part for clusters. Again, how wondrously thick are the knots which run round the reeds, as the Artificer hath made them! Out of the one earth come creeping things, and wild beasts, and cattle, and trees, and food, and gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and stone. Water was but of one nature, yet of it comes the life of things that swim, and of birds; and as the one swim in the waters, so also the birds fly in the air. And this great and wide sea, in it are things creeping innumerable! Who can tell the beauty of the fishes that are therein? Who can describe the greatness of the whales? . . . Who can tell the depth and breadth of the sea, or the force of its enormous waves? Yet it stays within its boundaries, because of Him Who said ‘Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy

proud waves be stayed.' And to show the decree imposed upon it, when it runs up on the land, it leaves a plain line on the sands by its waves; declaring as it were, to those who see it, that it has not passed its appointed bounds.

"Who can understand the nature of the fowls of the air? how some have with them a voice of melody, and others have their wings enriched with all manner of painting, and others soaring on high, stay motionless in the sky, as the hawk. For by the Divine command, 'the hawk having spread out her wings, stays motionless, looking down towards the south.' Who of men can behold the eagle? But if thou canst not read the mystery of birds when soaring on high, how wouldest thou read the Maker of all things?

"Who among men knows even the names of all wild beasts? or who can accurately classify their natures? But if we know not even their bare names, how shall we comprehend their Maker? The command of God was but one, which said, 'Let the earth bring forth wild beasts, and cattle, and creeping things after their kinds;' and distinct natures sprung from one voice at one command,—the gentle sheep, and the carnivorous lion,—also the various instincts of irrational creatures, as representations of the various characters of men. The fox is an emblem of men's craftiness, and the

snake, of a friend's envenomed treachery; and the neighing horse, of wanton young men; and that busy ant, to arouse the sluggish and the dull; for when a man passes his youth idly, then he is instructed by the irrational creatures, being reproved by that Scripture which saith, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise;'¹ for when thou beholdest her in due season treasuring up food for herself, do thou copy her, and treasure up for thyself the fruits of good works for the world to come. And again, 'Go to the bee and learn how industrious she is;'² how hovering about all kinds of flowers, she culls the honey for thy use, that thou also ranging over Holy Scripture mayest lay hold on thy salvation, and being satisfied with it mayest say, 'How sweet are Thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to my mouth.'³

"Is not the Artificer then rather worthy to be glorified? For what if thou know not the nature of every thing? are the things, therefore, which He has made, without their use? For canst thou know the efficacy of all herbs? or canst thou learn all the advantage which comes of every animal? Even from poisonous adders have come antidotes for the preservation of men. But thou wilt say to me, 'The snake is terrible:' fear thou the LORD,

¹ Prov. vi. 6.² Prov. vi. 8, Sept.³ Ps. cxix. and ciii.

and it shall not be able to hurt thee. 'The scorpion stings:' fear thou the LORD, and it shall not sting thee. 'The lion is bloodthirsty:' fear thou the LORD, and he shall lie down beside thee, as by Daniel. And truly there is whereat to wonder, in the power even of the creatures; how some, as the scorpion, have their weapon in a sting, while the power of others is in their teeth, and others again get the better by means of hoofs, and the basilisk's might is in his gaze. Thus from this varied workmanship, think of the Artificer's power.

"But these things, perchance, thou art not acquainted with; thou hast nothing in common with the creatures without thee. Now then enter into thyself, and consider the Artificer of thine own nature. What is there to find fault with in the framing of thy body? Master thyself, and there shall nothing evil proceed from any of thy members. . . .

"These things has my discourse dwelt on now, passing over many, yea, innumerable other matters, and especially things incorporeal and invisible, that on the one hand thou mayest abhor those who blaspheme that Good and Wise Artificer; and that on the other, from what has been spoken and read, and from what thou canst thyself find out or think of, thou mayest 'proportionably see the Creator

by the greatness and beauty of the creations;¹ and that bending the knee with godly reverence to the Maker of all things, things of sense and things of mind, visible and invisible, thou mayest with an honest and holy tongue, and with unwearied lips and heart sing praises to God, saying, ‘O LORD, how manifold are Thy works: in wisdom hast Thou made them all!’² for to Thee belongeth honour, and glory, and greatness, both now and for ever and ever. Amen.”³

Of the ever blessed Sacrifice of the Cross, S. Cyril speaks thus grandly: “Every deed of CHRIST is a boast of the Catholic Church, but her boast of boasts is the Cross; and knowing this, Paul says, ‘But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of CHRIST.’⁴ For wondrous indeed it was, that he who was blind from his birth should recover his sight in Siloam; but what is this compared with the blind of the whole world? It was a great thing, and passing nature, for Lazarus to rise again after four days; but this grace extended to him alone; and what was it compared with the dead in sin throughout the whole world? Marvellous was it, that five loaves should issue forth into food for the five thousand; but what is that to those who are famishing in ignorance through

¹ Wisd. xiii. 5.

² Ps. civ. 24.

³ Lect. ix.

⁴ Gal. vi. 14.

all the world? It was marvellous she should have been loosed who had been bound by Satan eighteen years; yet what is this to all of us, who are fast bound in the chains of our sins? Now the glory of the Cross has led into light those who were blind through ignorance, has loosed all who were held fast by sin, and has ransomed the whole world of men."¹

After dwelling at some length upon the Passion of our Blessed LORD, its foretelling, its types and mysteries, saying with the other Fathers, "Nothing happened without a meaning,"² he goes on: "Let us not then be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and in every thing; over the bread we eat, and the cups we drink; in our comings in and goings out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake; when we are in the way and when we are still. Great is that preservative; it is without price, for the poor's sake; without toil, for the sick; since also its grace is from GOD. It is the sign of the faithful, and the dread of devils: for He has 'triumphed over them in it, having made a show of them openly,'³ for when they see the Cross, they are reminded of the Crucified, they are afraid of Him,

¹ Lect. xiii. 1.

² Lect. xiii. 21.

³ Col. ii. 15.

Who hath 'bruised the heads of the dragon.'¹
Despise not the Seal, because of the freeness of the gift; but for this rather honour thy Benefactor.'²

The following quotation from the same lecture, though long, is too striking to be omitted :

"Deny not the Crucified ; for if thou deny Him, thou hast many to arraign thee. Judas the traitor will arraign thee first ; for he who betrayed Him, knew that He was condemned to death by the chief priests and elders. The thirty pieces of silver bear witness ; Gethsemane bears witness, where the betrayal happened ; I speak not yet of the Mount of Olives, on which they were that night, praying. The moon in the night bears witness, the day bears witness, and the darkened sun ; for it endured not to look on the crime of the conspirators. The fire remonstrates with thee, by which Peter stood and warmed himself ; if thou deny the Cross, the eternal fire awaits thee. I say what is severe, that thou mayest not have experience of it. Remember the swords that came against Him in Gethsemane, that thou be not punished by the eternal sword. The house of Caiaphas will arraign thee, showing by its present desolation the power of Him Who was erewhile judged there. Yea, Caiaphas himself will rise up against thee in the

¹ Ps. lxxiv. 13.

² Lect. xiii. 36.

day of judgment; the very servant will rise up against thee, who smote JESUS with the palm of his hand; they also who bound Him, and they who led Him away. Even Herod shall rise up against thee; and Pilate, as if saying, Why deniest thou Him, Who was slandered unto us by the Jews, Whom we knew to have done no wrong? For I, Pilate, then washed my hands. The false witnesses shall rise up against thee, and the soldiers who put on Him the purple robe, and set on Him the crown of thorns, and crucified Him in Golgotha, and cast lots for His coat. Simon the Cyrenian will cry out upon thee, who bore the Cross behind JESUS.

“There will cry out upon thee, among the stars, the darkened sun; among the things upon earth, the wine mingled with myrrh; among weeds, the reed; among herbs, the hyssop; among the things of the sea, the sponge; among trees, the wood of the Cross;—the soldiers too, as was said, who nailed Him and cast lots for His vesture; the soldier who pierced His Side with the spear; the women who then were present; the veil of the temple then rent asunder; the hall of Pilate, now laid waste by the power of Him Who was then crucified; this holy Golgotha, rising on high, and showing itself to this day, and displaying even yet how because of CHRIST the rocks were then

riven; the neighbouring sepulchre where He was laid; and the stone which was laid on the door, which lies to this day by the tomb, the Angels who then were present; the women who worshipped Him after His Resurrection; Peter and John, who ran to the sepulchre; and Thomas, who thrust his hand into His Side, and his finger into the print of the nails. For it was for our sakes that he so carefully handled Him; for what thou who wast not present, wouldest have sought, he being present, by God's Providence, did seek.

“Thou hast twelve Apostles, witnesses of the Cross; and the whole earth, and the world of men who believe on Him Who was upon it. Let thy very presence here now persuade thee of the power of the Crucified. For who has now brought thee to this assembly? what soldiers? with what hands hast thou been forced? what doom has driven thee here now? No, but the salutary Trophy of JESUS, the Cross, has brought you all together. This has enslaved the Persians, and tamed the Scythians; this to the Egyptians, has given for cats and dogs, and their manifold errors, the knowledge of God; this, to this day heals diseases; this, to this day drives away devils, and overthrows the juggleries of drugs and charms.

“This shall appear again with JESUS from heaven;

for the trophy shall precede the King;¹ that seeing ‘Him Whom they pierced,’² and by the Cross knowing Him Who was dishonored, the Jews may repent and mourn; (but ‘they shall mourn tribe by tribe,’³ when their season for repentance shall be no more;) and that we may glory, boasting of the Cross, worshipping the LORD Who was sent, and crucified for us, and worshipping also GOD His FATHER Who sent Him, with the HOLY GHOST, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”⁴

S. Cyril proceeds with the Resurrection, Ascension, and Exaltation of CHRIST, reminding His disciples that they must not think, “because He is absent in the flesh, He is therefore absent also in the Spirit. He is here present in the midst of us, listening to what is said of Him, and beholding what is in thy mind, and trying the reins and the hearts;—who also is now ready to present those who are coming to Baptism, and all of you, in the HOLY GHOST to the FATHER, and to say, Behold I, and the children whom God hath given Me.”⁵ Then he treats of the Second Advent, and the Last Judgment, in speaking of which occurs the follow-

¹ “ Dies iræ, dies illa,
Crucis expandens vexilla
Solvat seclum in favilla.”

² Zech. xii. 10.

³ Ibid. v. 12, Sept.

⁴ Lect. xiii. 38—41.

⁵ Lect. xiv. 30.

ing passage. "But some one present will say, 'I am a poor man,' or again, 'I shall perhaps be found at that time sick and in bed,' or 'I am but a woman, and I shall be taken at the mill, shall we then be despised?' Be of good courage, O man; the Judge is no respecter of persons; 'He will not judge according to a man's appearance, nor reprove according to his speech.'¹ He honors not the learned before the simple, nor the rich before the needy. Though thou be in the field, the Angels shall take thee; think not that He will take the landlord, and leave thee the farmer. Though thou be a slave, though thou be poor, be not any whit distressed; He who took the form of a servant despises not servants. Though thou be laid sick upon thy bed, yet it is written, 'Then shall two be in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left.'² Though thou be of necessity put to grind, whether thou be man or woman; though thou have children, and sit beside the mill, yet He Who by His Might bringeth out them that are bound, overlooks thee not. He Who brought forth Joseph out of ward and bondage to a kingdom, redeems thee also from thy afflictions into the kingdom of heaven. Only be of good cheer, only work, only strive cheerfully; for nothing is lost. Every prayer of thine, every psalm thou singest is re-

¹ Isa. xi. 3, Sept.

² S. Luke xvii. 34.

corded; every almsdeed, every fact is recorded. . . . But as thou hast gladly listened to the good things, listen without shrinking to the contrary. Every covetous deed of thine is recorded; every act of fornication is recorded against thee, every false oath of thine is recorded, every blasphemy, every sorcery, every theft, every murder. All these things are henceforth recorded, if thou do them after having been baptized; for thy former deeds are blotted out.”¹

The lectures on the HOLY GHOST the Comforter conclude with these beautiful words: “All thy life long will the Comforter abide with thee; He will care for thee, as for His own soldier, concerning thy goings out and thy comings in, and thy plotting foes. And He will give thee gifts of grace of every kind, if thou grieve Him not by sin.”²

Following the Articles of the Creed, S. Cyril treats of the Resurrection of the body, saying, “Does a tree after it has been cut down blos-

¹ Lect. xv. 23.

² Lect. xvii. 37. The 121st Psalm might be taken from this lecture.

“At home, abroad, in peace, in war,
Thy God shall thee defend;
Conduct thee through life’s pilgrimage,
Safe to thy journey’s end.”

som again, and shall not man blossom again when cut down? And does the corn sown and reaped remain to the threshing floor, and shall man when reaped from this world not remain for the threshing? And do shoots of vine or other trees, when clean cut off and transplanted, come to life and bear fruit; and shall man then, for whose sake all these are, fall into the earth, and not rise again? Comparing efforts, which is greater, to mould in the outset a statue which was not, or to recast it after the same model when fallen to pieces? Cannot God, then, who created us out of nothing, raise us again, who are and who decay? . . . The season is now winter, as thou seest; the trees now stand as if they were dead: where are the leaves of the fig-tree? where are the clusters of the vine? These in winter time are dead, but in the spring green, and when the season is come, there is given them, as it were, a quickening from a state of death. For God, knowing thine unbelief, works a resurrection year by year in these visible things; that beholding what happens to things inanimate, thou mayest believe concerning things animate and intelligent.”¹

His doctrine concerning the Holy Catholic Church is briefly summed up. “It is called Catholic because it is throughout the world, and because

Lect. xviii. 6.

it teaches, universally and completely, one and all the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly ; and because it subjugates in order to godliness every class of men, governors and governed, learned and unlearned ; and because it universally treats and heals every sort of sins, which are committed by soul or body, and possesses in itself every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gift.¹

. . . If ever thou art sojourning in any city," he says further, "inquire not simply where the LORD's house is, (for the sects of the profane also make an attempt to call their own dens houses of the LORD,) nor merely where the Church is, but where is the Catholic Church. For this is the peculiar name of this Holy Body, the mother of us all, which is the spouse of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, &c.² While the kings of particular nations have bounds set to their dominions, the Holy Church Catholic alone extends her illimitable sovereignty over the whole world ; for GOD, as it is written, 'hath made her border peace.'³ . . . In this Holy Catholic Church receiving instruction and behaving ourselves virtuously, we shall attain the Kingdom of Heaven, and inherit eternal life ; for which also we endure all toils, that we may be made par-

¹ Lect. xviii. 23.² Ibid. 26.³ Ps. cxlvii. 14, Sept.

takers of it from the LORD. For ours is no trifling aim; eternal life is our object of pursuit.”¹

The remaining five lectures are addressed to those recently baptized, and are upon the Sacred Mysteries; i.e., Holy Baptism, and the Blessed Eucharist. S. Cyril explains various parts of the ceremonial of Baptism, and it is peculiarly useful for us in this present age, which is inclined to hold all ceremonial and outward observance as superfluous and cumbersome, to remark how universally the Fathers and holy men of old dwell upon each least circumstance and ceremonial as important, because bearing the deep significance of higher things. Thus S. Cyril says, “First, ye entered into the outer hall of the Baptistery, and there facing towards the west, ye heard the command to stretch forth your hand, and as in the presence of Satan ye renounced him. . . . I wish to say, wherefore ye stand facing to the west, for it is necessary. Since the west is the region of sensible darkness, and he being darkness, has his dominion also in darkness, ye therefore, looking with a symbolical meaning towards the west, renounce that dark and gloomy potentate. What then did each of you standing up say? ‘I renounce thee, Satan, thou wicked and most cruel tyrant!’ meaning, I fear thy might no longer, for CHRIST hath overthrown

¹ Lect. xviii. 27, 28.

it, having partaken with me of flesh and blood, that through these He 'might by death destroy death,' (Heb. ii. 14,) that I might not for ever be subject to bondage. I renounce thee, thou crafty and most subtle serpent. I renounce thee, plotter as thou art, who under the guise of friendship didst work all disobedience, and bring about the apostasy of our first parents. I renounce thee, Satan, the artificer and abettor of all wickedness."¹

He then continues enlarging upon the several points of renunciation, "all thy works," "all thy pomp," and "all thy service." Among which he includes "all deeds and thoughts which are against thy better judgment;"² the "madness of shows and horseraces," wanton gestures and frantic dancing, and the contests of the arena: idol sacrifices; things done in honor of lifeless idols; the watching of birds, divination, omens or amulets, and all such superstitions. "When therefore thou renoucest Satan," he goes on to say, "utterly breaking all covenant with him, that ancient league with hell, there is opened to thee the Paradise of God, which He planted towards the east, whence for his transgression our first father was exiled; and symbolical of this was thy turning from the west to the east, the place of light."³

¹ Lect. xix. 2, 4.

² Lect. xix. 4.

³ Lect. xix. 9.

Having entered the Baptistry, the candidate put off his garment. "And this was an image of putting off the old man with his deeds. (Col. iii. 9.) Having stripped yourselves, ye were naked; in this also imitating CHRIST Who hung naked on the Cross, and by His nakedness spoiled principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree. (Col. ii. 15.) For since the powers of the enemy made their lair in your members, ye may no longer wear that old vestment; I do not at all mean this visible one, but that old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. (Eph. iv. 22.) May no soul which has once put him off, again put him on, but say with the spouse of CHRIST in the Song of Songs, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? (Cant. v. 3.) . . . Then when ye were stripped, ye were anointed with exorcised oil, from the very hairs of your head, to your feet, and were made partakers of the good olive tree, JESUS CHRIST. For ye were cut off from the wild olive tree, and grafted into the good one, and were made to share the fatness of the true olive tree. The exorcised oil, therefore, was a symbol of the participation of the fatness of CHRIST, the charm to drive away every trace of hostile influence. For as the breathing of the Saints and the Invocation of the Name of God, like fiercest flame, scorch and drive out evil spirits,

so also this exorcised oil receives such virtue by the invocation of GOD, and by prayer, as not only to burn and cleanse away the traces of sins, but also to chase away all the invisible powers of the Evil One.

“After these things, ye were led to the holy pool of Divine Baptism, as CHRIST was carried from the Cross to the Sepulchre, which is before our eyes. And each of you was asked, whether he believed in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, and ye made that saving confession, and descended three times into the water, and ascended again ; here also covertly pointing by a figure at the three-days’ burial of CHRIST. For as our SAVIOUR passed three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, so you also by the first ascent out of the water, represented the first day of CHRIST in the earth, and by your descent, the night ; for as he who is in the night sees no more, but he who is in the day remains in the light, so in descending, ye saw nothing as in the night, but in ascending again, ye were as in the day. And at the self-same moment, ye died and were born ; and that water of salvation was at once your grave and your mother. And what Solomon spoke of others will suit you also ; for he said, ‘There is a time to bear, and a time to die ;’ (Eccles. iii. 2 ;) but to you on the contrary, the time to die is also

the time to be born ; and one and the same season brings about both of these, and your birth went hand in hand with your death.”¹

Proceeding to speak of the holy Chrism, S. Cyril says, “ Ye were first anointed on the forehead, that ye might be delivered from the shame which the first man, when he had transgressed, bore about with him everywhere ; and that with open face ye might behold as in a glass the glory of the LORD. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Then on your ears, that ye might receive ears quick to hear the Divine mysteries, of which Esaias has said, The LORD wakened mine ear to hear ; (Isa. l. 4 ;) and the LORD JESUS in the Gospel, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (S. Matt. xi. 15.) Then on your nostrils, that receiving the sacred ointment ye may say, We are to GOD a sweet savour of CHRIST in them that are saved. (2 Cor. ii. 15.) Then on your breast, that having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, ye may stand against the wiles of the devil. (Eph. vi. 14 and 11.) For as CHRIST after His Baptism, and the descent of the HOLY GHOST, went forth and vanquished the adversary, so likewise, having after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, put on the whole armour of the HOLY GHOST, do ye stand against the power of the enemy, and van-

¹ Lect. xx. 2—4.

quish it, saying, 'I can do all things through CHRIST Which strengtheneth me.' (Phil. iv. 13.) When ye are counted worthy of this Chrism, ye are called Christians, verifying also the name by your new birth."¹

The last two lectures are upon the Holy Eucharist. "Therefore with fullest assurance," he says, "let us partake as of the Body and Blood of CHRIST: for in the figure of Bread is given to thee His Body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that thou by partaking of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, mightest be made of the same body and the same blood with Him. For thus we come to bear CHRIST in us, because His Body and Blood are diffused through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, we become partakers of the divine nature. (2 S. Pet. i. 4.)

"Contemplate therefore the Bread and Wine not as bare elements, for they are, according to the LORD's declaration, the Body and Blood of CHRIST; for though sense suggests this to thee, let faith stablish me. Judge not the matter from taste, but from faith be fully assured, without misgiving, that thou hast been vouchsafed the Body and Blood of CHRIST. . . . Thus being fully persuaded that what seems bread, is not bread, though bread by

¹ Lect. xxi. 4—5.

taste, but the Body of CHRIST; and that what seems wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the Blood of CHRIST, and that of this David sung of old, saying, And bread which strengtheneth man's heart, and oil to make his face to shine; (Ps. civ. 15;) strengthen thine heart, partaking thereof as spiritual, and make the face of thy soul to shine."¹

Continuing to explain the ritual itself, he says, "After this the Priest cries aloud, 'Lift up your hearts.' For truly ought we in that awful hour to have our heart on high with God, and not below, thinking of earth and earthly things. The Priest then in effect bids all in that hour abandon all worldly thoughts, or household cares, and to have their heart in Heaven with the Merciful God. Then ye answer, 'We lift them up unto the LORD,' assenting to him, by your avowal. But let no one come here who with his lips can say, 'We lift up our hearts to the LORD,' but in mind employs his thoughts on worldly business. God indeed should be in our memory at all times, but if this is impossible by reason of human infirmity, at least in that hour, this should be our earnest endeavour. Then the Priest says, 'Let us give thanks to the LORD.' For in good sooth we are bound to give thanks, that He has called us, un-

¹ Lect. xxii. 3, 6, 9.

worthy as we are, to so great grace; that He has reconciled us who were His foes; that He hath vouchsafed to us the Spirit of adoption. Then ye say, 'It is meet and right:' for in giving thanks we do a meet and right thing; but He did not a right thing, but what was more than right, when He did us good, and counted us meet for such great benefits.

"After this we make mention of heaven and earth, and sea; of the sun and moon; of the stars and all the creation, rational and irrational, visible and invisible; of angels, archangels, virtues, dominions, principalities, powers, thrones; of the cherubims with many faces: in effect repeating that call of David's, 'Magnify the LORD with me.' We make mention also of the seraphim, whom Esaias by the HOLY GHOST beheld encircling the throne of God, and with two of their wings veiling their countenances, and with two their feet, and with two flying, who cried, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God of Sabaoth. For for this cause rehearse we this confession of God, delivered down to us from the Seraphim, that we may join in hymns with the hosts of the world above.

"Then, having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns, we call upon the Merciful God to send forth His HOLY SPIRIT upon the gifts lying before Him, that He may make the bread

the Body of CHRIST, and the wine the Blood of CHRIST; for whatsoever the HOLY GHOST has touched, is sanctified and changed.

“Then after the spiritual sacrifice is perfected, the Bloodless Service upon that Sacrifice of Propitiation, we intreat GOD for the common peace of the Church, for the tranquillity of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted, and, in a word, for all who stand in need of succour we all supplicate and offer this sacrifice.

“Then we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us; first, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, that at their prayers and intervention GOD would receive our petition. Afterwards, also, on behalf of the holy Fathers and Bishops, who have fallen asleep among us, believing that it will be a very great advantage to the souls for whom the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful sacrifice is presented.”¹

S. Cyril concludes by giving minute directions as to the reception of the blessed Sacrament, assuming that neither paten nor chalice is denied to any communicating.

“Approaching therefore, come not with thy wrists extended, or thy fingers open; but make thy left hand as if a throne for thy right, which is on the eve of receiving the King. And having hal-

¹ Lect. xxiii. 4—9.

lowed thy palm, receive the Body of CHRIST, saying after It, Amen. Then after thou hast with carefulness hallowed thine eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake thereof; giving heed lest thou lose any of it; for what thou lovest, is a loss to thee as it were from one of thine own members. For tell me, if any one gave thee gold dust, wouldest thou not with all precaution keep it fast, being on thy guard against losing any of it, and suffering loss? How much more cautiously then wilt thou observe that not a crumb fall from thee, of what is more precious than gold and precious stones?

“Then, after having partaken of the Body of CHRIST, approach also to the Cup of His Blood; not stretching forth thine hands, but bending and saying in the way of worship and reverence, Amen, be thou hallowed by partaking also of the Blood of CHRIST. And while the moisture is still upon thy lips, touching it with thine hands, hallow both thine eyes and brow, and the other senses. Then wait for the prayer, and give thanks unto God, Who hath accounted thee worthy of so great mysteries.

“Hold fast these traditions unspotted, and keep yourselves free from offence. Sever not yourselves from the Communion, deprive not yourselves, by the pollution of sins, of these holy and spiritual

mysteries. And the GOD of Peace sanctify you wholly ; and may your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST: to whom be glory, and honor, and might, with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, now and ever, and world without end. Amen."¹

In such labours, instructing the sheep of the flock, and leading them to that glorious fruition towards which all Sacraments, all solemnities, all devotions, are but a means, S. Cyril continued zealously serving GOD, until his elevation to the See of Jerusalem. Confused stories, and vague accusations have been set forth concerning this elevation, as though Cyril had in some measure compromised the Faith, and yielded against his conscience to the Arian party. But these calumnies are entirely refuted by the synodical letter of the Council of Constantinople to the Western Bishops, in which, after mentioning the consecration of Narcissus to the See of Constantinople, and Flavian to that of Antioch, they continue: "We must apprise you, that the revered and pious Cyril is Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, which is the mother of all the Churches; that he was ordained according to law by the Bishops of the province, and that he has in various places with-

¹ Lect. xxiii. 21—23.

stood the Arians. We beseech you to rejoice with us that these Bishops have been ordained in a manner so strictly in accordance with the canon, and we intreat you to be united to them by spiritual love, and by the fear of the LORD, which represses human passions, and which causes us to attach more importance to the edification of the Church than to the love or sympathy of any creature. When we have come to one mind respecting the doctrines of faith, and when Christian love is established between us, we shall cease from saying what the Apostle condemns, 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas.' We shall all be of CHRIST, Who will not be divided in us; but by GOD'S Help we shall preserve the oneness of the body of the Church, and shall stand with confidence before the tribunal of the LORD."¹

Theodoret likewise mentions Cyril's promotion to the See of Jerusalem, as an event unsought by himself, saying that when Maximus was removed by GOD to a higher state of existence, his vacant bishopric was *conferred* on Cyril, a zealous defender of the Apostolic doctrines.²

In the beginning of Cyril's episcopate, an event occurred which at the time made a great noise throughout the world. This was a marvellous meteoric appearance in the heavens of the sign of

¹ Theodoret, v. 9.

² Theodoret, ii. 26.

salvation—not feeble and divergent as the light of comets, but of a clear firm brilliance, not surpassed by the sun itself.¹

An interesting account of this phenomenon is given by S. Cyril himself in a letter to the Emperor.

“To the most divinely favored and religious Prince, Constantius, the August, Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, sendeth greeting :

“These first fruits of my letters from Jerusalem, I send to your sacred Majesty, being such as may become both you to receive, and me to give ; letters, not stuffed with flattering expressions, but which give account of divine and heavenly visions, not which insinuate themselves by rhetorical persuasives, but contain holy evangelical predictions, justifying their truth by the event of things. Others indeed of such things, whence they derive their lustre, may bring golden crowns, curiously beset with precious stones, wherewith they oft adorn your honorable temples ; but we crown you not with earthly presents, things that arising from, are confined within the verge of this lower world, but we carefully convey to your notice the divine efficacy of those heavenly appearances, which have happened at Jerusalem in your reign. Not that by this means you may be brought out of a state of ignorance, and receive the first principles of the

¹ Sozomen, iv. 5.

knowledge of God, (for such are your improvements in piety that you seem able to instruct others in matters of religion) but that you may be the firmler established in those things which you are wont to discourse of; and that learning hence how much God has crowned your empire, derived to you as a paternal inheritance, with greater honors, and more divine and heavenly blessings, you may be the stronglier incited to offer up, at this time especially, the highest praises to the Supreme Sovereign of the world, and be inspired with a greater vigour and courage against your enemies, being assured by these miraculous attestations that God takes a particular care of your empire and government. In the time of your father Constantine, a prince beloved of heaven, and of blessed memory, the wholesome wood of the Cross was found at Jerusalem, the divine goodness granting it as a peculiar favor to him, who set himself to embrace the true religion, that he should make discovery of the most concealed holy places. But in your time who have so far outgone in devotion and piety, God is pleased to grant prodigies, not any longer upon earth, but from heaven;—I mean the blessed Cross of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, the Only-begotten SON of God, the trophy of His victory and triumph over death, which shining with extraordinary beams of light, was lately seen at Jerusa-

lem. For upon these holy and festival days of Pentecost, May 7th, about nine in the morning, a vast and miraculous cross, formed of light, appeared in the heavens, just over the holy Golgotha, extending itself to the sacred Mount of Olives, seen not by one or two, but clearly and evidently by the whole city; nor as some may suspect, passing by only in a transient glance of fancy, but plainly visible to us below for very many hours together, by its lustre out-dazzling the bright beams of the sun; for otherwise being overcome, it must have been obscured by them, had it not darted out more powerful and refulgent rays of light to the eyes of the beholders, so that the whole city, struck with fear at the amazing accident, not without a mixture of joy and gladness, instantly repaired to the church, where you might see persons of all ages, young and old, men and women, yea, the newly married leaving their bridal chambers to come thither; Christians, both inhabitants and strangers, yea, and great numbers of Gentiles from other parts; all of them with one mouth and one accord glorifying our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Only-Begotten SON of GOD, and the Author of these miraculous spectations; being convinced by real experience, that the most holy Christian religion 'lies not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,'

and was not merely revealed by man, but witnessed to by God from heaven. Wherefore we, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, having beholden this miraculous prodigy with our eyes, with all thankfulness, as becomes us, do and will adore the Great God, and His Only Begotten Son, and both have done, and still will in this holy place offer up our continual prayers for your government, so dear to heaven. I thought it not good therefore to suppress these heavenly visions in silence, but have made it my care to convey them to you as good tidings, and instances of the Divine Benignity; that so, upon the good foundation of the faith already embraced, building a further knowledge of what has thus strangely and supernaturally come to pass, you may have a firmer assurance in our LORD JESUS CHRIST; being confident, according to your wonted trust, you may, as one that has God Himself for your assistant, advance the banner of the Cross, the greatest ground of rejoicing, and cheerfully produce the sign that was showed from heaven; a representation, at whose appearance the heavens did greatly rejoice and triumph. This wonderful prodigy, most religious Emperor, pursuant to the predictions of the prophets, and to the words of CHRIST recorded in the Gospel, is now fulfilled, and will hereafter be yet further fulfilled. For when our SAVIOUR, in S. Matthew's

Gospel, communicated to His blessed Apostles the notices of future things, and by them imparted them to others that conversed with them, He most evidently foretold it, saying, ' And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.' This holy book of the Gospels, when as you are wont, you take into your hands, you will find these predictions and testimonies written there ; to which I beseech you attend with the greater care and diligence, by reason of those other things there described, and foretold by our SAVIOUR, and which it concerns us with all fear narrowly to observe, lest we suffer damage from those adverse powers that watch against us. These first fruits of my discourses, sir, I offer to you, being the first messages I send from Jerusalem ; to you I offer them, the sincere and most holy worshipper together with us, of CHRIST the Only Begotten SON of GOD, Who upon His Cross at Jerusalem did, according to the Holy Scriptures, work out the Salvation of all mankind, where He overcame death, and by His own precious Blood expiated the sins of men, and gave spiritual life and immortality and heavenly grace to all them that believed on Him. Preserved by Whose power and goodness, and daily blessed with greater and more eminent advances in piety, and enriched with the royal stem of a numerous issue, let GOD, the Great King of all the world, and the Giver of all

Goodness, grant you a long, peaceable, and a prosperous reign, and watch over you as a glory to Christians, and a blessing to the whole world; let Him strengthen and adorn you with all virtue, that you may still show your accustomed love and kindness both to the holy Churches and to the Roman empire, and enrich you with larger rewards of piety. God Almighty grant you to us, most august and religious Emperor, for many periods of peaceable years, and continue you happy and prosperous, a constant praiser and professor of the holy and consubstantial TRINITY; to Whom as is most due, be all glory for ever and ever. Amen."¹

The excitement produced by this marvellous appearance was great, as might be expected, and many, both Jews and Gentiles, were converted thereby to the Christian faith.

The history of S. Cyril's episcopate is one series of troubles and perplexities. He was scarcely installed in the See, when a contest arose between him and Acacius, Bishop of Cæsarea, concerning the authority of Metropolitan, which both claimed.² Acacius was a leader of the Arian party, and abetted by other Prelates of the same heresy, he deposed Cyril. Unfaithfulness to the Church is an accusation easily raised against any man who

¹ Cave's Life of S. Cyril. See Sozomen, iv. 5.

² Theodoret, ii. 26. Soz. iv. 5.

is more devoted and less timeserving than his neighbours, and too often justice fails in inquiring with sufficient minuteness into the cry. Acacius brought forward a story, how during a famine which pressed heavily upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all the people looked to Cyril as their only earthly help, he had, when all other means of assistance failed, sold the vestments, the consecrated hangings, and holy vessels of the Church. Some person who had offered a costly vestment, was said to have recognised his offering profaned as the stage costume of an actress, who indicated the merchant to whom it had been sold by the Bishop.¹ A similar accusation was at another time raised against S. Chrysostom.

Forced to leave Jerusalem, S. Cyril first went to Antioch, but finding that See likewise in a state of confusion, and without any chief pastor, he proceeded to Tarsus, and placing himself under the authority of Sylvanus, Bishop of that city, he continued calmly to exercise the talents which God had given him, not to be wrapped in a napkin, or hid under a bushel, teaching and preaching as if nothing had happened. But his enemy Acacius was not content to let the matter rest here. He wrote to Sylvanus, calumniating his guest, and urged the fact of his deposition. The Bishop of

¹ Soz. iv. 25.

Tarsus, however, had satisfactory proof of what Cyril really was, he himself revered him, and the people loved him, greedily hearkening to his instruction ; and accordingly no heed was given to the Arian Prelate's accusations.¹

Acacius continued attacking Cyril, who on his part appealed to the Emperor. Towards the close of the year 359, a council was assembled at Seleucia, in order if possible to restore some peace to the harassed and distracted Church. One hundred and sixty Bishops met together, and by them Cyril and other accused Bishops were to be judged. Contest within contest, wheel within wheel. Acacius required that Cyril, as one deposed, should not be permitted to sit in the council.² Some of his friends urged Cyril to comply for the sake of peace, but he declined doing this, lest it should appear as though he acknowledged the sentence of deposition. A further difference arose, as to whether the cases of the accused Bishops or those matters of faith under discussion should first be considered. The majority decided to take doctrinal affairs first into consideration, and then began a vehement discussion. Acacius and his party wishing to cancel the Nicene Creed, the other side adopting it, all save the one term, *Consubstantial*, to which they objected.³

At last, after various windings and doublings,

¹ Theod. ii. 26.

² Ibid.

³ Socrates, ii. 39.

little creditable to Acacius and his party, he put forth the following protest: "We, having assembled by the Emperor's command at Seleucia, a city of Isauria, on the 27th day of September, exerted ourselves to the utmost, with all moderation, to preserve the peace of the Church, and to determine doctrinal questions on prophetic and evangelic authority, so as to sanction nothing in the ecclesiastic confession of faith at variance with the sacred Scriptures, as our Emperor Constantius, most beloved of God, has ordered. But inasmuch as certain individuals in the synod have acted injuriously toward several of us, preventing some from expressing their sentiments, and excluding others from the council against their wills, and at the same time have introduced such as have been deposed, and persons who have been ordained contrary to the ecclesiastical canon, so that the synod has presented a scene of tumult and disorder, of which the most illustrious Leonas the Comes, and the most eminent Lauricias, the Governor, have been eye witnesses; we are therefore under the necessity of making this declaration. Not that we repudiate the faith which was ratified at the consecration of the Church at Antioch, for we give it our decided preference, because it received the concurrence of our fathers, who were there assembled to consider some controverted points. Since how-

ever the terms *Consubstantial*, and *of like substance*,¹ have in times past troubled the minds of many, and still continue to disquiet them ; and moreover, that a new term has recently been coined by some who assert the *dissimilitude*² of the SON to the FATHER ; we reject the first two, as expressions which are not found in the Scriptures ; but we utterly anathematize the last, and regard such as countenance its use as alienated from the Church. We distinctly acknowledge the *likeness*³ of the SON to the FATHER, in accordance with what the Apostle has declared of Him, ‘ Who is the Image of the Invisible God.’ ” (Col. i. 15.)⁴

Then follows their Creed. The Bishop of Pompeiopolis upon this rose, and observed, that “ if to explain our own private opinion day after day, be received as the exposition of the Faith, we shall never arrive at any accurate understanding of the truth.” Yet some more disputes, some more confusion, and the synod terminated, having deposed Acacius, George of Alexandria, and others ; a deputation preparing to go to the Emperor Constantius, then at Constantinople, but Acacius was beforehand with them ;⁵ he reached the Emperor first, and telling him that the Seleucian Synod was an assemblage of wicked men, who were intent upon causing the ruin

¹ Ὁμοούσιον. Ὁμοιούσιον.

² Ἀνόμοιον.

³ Ὁμοιον.

⁴ Socrat. ii. 40.

⁵ Socrat. ii. 41.

and destruction of the Church, he succeeded in poisoning his mind, and kindling his indignation. Out of the accusation that Cyril had sold Church property for the relief of the poor, Acacius concocted a story which specially excited the Emperor's wrath. There was a certain very costly robe of golden cloth, which Constantine had presented to Macarius, when Bishop of Jerusalem, to be worn when he administered the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. This robe Acacius accused Cyril of having sold to an actor, who wearing it on the stage, fell down under the Hand of God, and instantly expired.¹

No redress being obtained from Constantine, Cyril probably remained in his retirement at Tarsus, until Julian the Apostate, as an act of policy recalled all those prelates whom his predecessor had banished to their sees.² Historians agree in believing him to have returned to Jerusalem on this occasion. He was evidently restored at the time of Julian's fruitless attempts to rebuild the Jewish temple. This design was an insidious effort on his part to give a blow the deeper because under covert, to Christianity. He began by inquiring why the Jews neglected their enjoined sacrificial rites, and being told that these could only be celebrated in the temple, he desired them to rebuild it, promising his assistance and countenance. Julian's

¹ Theodoret, ii. 27.

² Theodoret, iii. 4.

Christian education made him well aware of the doom pronounced on the temple by CHRIST, and he hoped by defying the prophecy to prove the SAVIOUR a false prophet. The Jews set about their undertaking with highly kindled expectations, but S. Cyril looking calmly on, pointed to the Prophet Daniel and to the words of CHRIST, that not one stone should be left upon another; professing his firm conviction that those words would be fulfilled. Meanwhile artificers came from all quarters, materials of every description were prepared, and the Jewish women in their eagerness lent their aid. But who can fight against God? against Him Who measures the waters in the hollow of His Hand? Who metes out heaven with a span, comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, taking up the isles as a very little thing? He it is, Who bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity; and now His Word went forth concerning this impious design to do dishonor to His Holy SON. "They shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth; He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble."¹

¹ Isaiah xl.

A mighty earthquake tore up the old foundations of the temple, destroying other buildings near, and causing considerable loss of life and limb. Fire from heaven destroyed the tools and implements of the workmen,¹ and one morning all the Jews found their garments stamped with black crosses, which they vainly endeavoured to efface or wash out.² This defeat of an undertaking, the real aim of which was obvious to all, excited great attention everywhere, and as is frequently the case, the attempt to injure the truth served but to extend and promulgate it.³

We find but scanty mention of S. Cyril from this time forth in the cotemporary ecclesiastical historians. Once he is mentioned as undertaking the guardianship of a young man, the son of a pagan Priest, who having been converted to Christianity by means of a certain deaconess, underwent grievous persecution from his father, and was conducted in disguise to Meletius, who confided the young convert to Cyril, then returning to Jerusalem. This youth in later years converted his father also to

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus mentions the defeat of this attempt by lightning and fire from the earth as the foundations were preparing.

² Socrates, iii. 20.

³ See S. Chrysostom's comments on this event. Adv. Jud. Orat., and quoted by Cave, Lives of the Fathers, vol. iii. p. 110.

Christianity.¹ At the time of Theodosius' accession all the Eastern Churches, with the exception of Jerusalem, were in the hands of the Arians,² and Cyril was still in possession of that See.³ He appointed his nephew Gelasius to the important See of Cæsarea in Palestine, a man distinguished by the purity of his doctrine, and the sanctity of his life.⁴ He was one of the principal Fathers present at the Great Council of Constantinople in the year 380, and as has been already mentioned, his rightful possession of his See was confirmed in this Council. According to S. Jerome, S. Cyril lived five years after this, and died in the year 385 or 386,⁵ in a quiet peaceful old age. The 18th of March is commemorated in the church as the day of his departure from this troublesome world.

Knowing what we do concerning this venerable Father, it must remain a matter of regret that we know so little; but it appears from the earliest times to have been God's Will in the case of many of His most eminent servants, that scarce any, or the most imperfect memorials should remain to us of them. How many of the Apostles are hardly more than mentioned! how many holy names, doubtless inscribed in the Book of Life, have next

¹ Theod. iii. 14.

² Sozomen, vii. 2.

³ Socrates, v. 3.

⁴ Theod. v. 8.

⁵ Hieron. de Script. c. 112. Socrat. vii. 14.

to no earthly record! for God's calendar is not like man's calendar. There is unquestionably a wise purpose in this; while the fuller history of some is preserved to us for our guidance and edification—lights set before us on our heavenward path, others are veiled from our curious gaze, as though to teach us not to count the praise or commemoration of men to be worthy of esteem to those who have gone to appear before a higher tribunal, whose judgment alone is of any true import to them or us. May we on the great day when all men of all ages must stand before that Judgment Throne, be found on the Right Hand of the Judge, together with all those holy men, whose bright shining lights, more or less clearly displayed, have helped to guide us through the darkness of the world.

S. EPHREM OF EDESSA.

“Thy robe must be thy Master’s humble stole,
Watching and fast, and fast and watching, thence
Long midnight meditations, grave and deep.
. Other dress
Faith owns not, save her Master’s lowliness.”

S. EPHREM OF EDESSA.

“ Oh, hide me in thy temple, ark serene,
Where safe upon the swell of this rude sea,
I might survey the stars, thy towers between,
And might pray always ; not that I would be
Uplifted, or would fain not dwell with thee,
On the rough waters, but in soul within
I sigh for Thy pure calm, serene, and free ;
I too would prove Thy temple, mid the din
Of earthly things, unstain'd by care or sin.”

The Cathedral.

**HIS CHILDHOOD.—GREAT LEARNING.—HIS WRITINGS.—HIS
YOUTH.—EASTERN MONKS.—EDESSA.—TRADITIONS OF IT.
—KING ABGARUS.—EPHREM ORDAINED DEACON.—HE
VISITS CÆSAREA.—FAMINE IN EDESSA.—HIS EXERTIONS.
—HIS DEATH.**

To some of God's chosen servants a part is assigned brilliant in the eyes of men, filled with both cares and honors which attract the attention of men ; great events, mighty contests and stern struggles are recorded, as though to teach those to whom

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they are set forth as bright stars and guides, that the crown, the mitre, the sword, and the crosier may each in their turn prove a stepping stone to the narrow gate into which our Blessed LORD has said, so few enter. But to others the Wise Father of all men appoints a course little marked with great or striking events—simple, monotonous, unheeded of men, yet watched over, and duly noted down by the unseen beings who are ever around us, joying or sorrowing according as we stand or fall. And though there is little to record of the Abels, the Marys, and the Clements, beyond that the LORD “had respect” unto them, that they “loved much,” or that their “names are written in the Book of Life:” in the Great Day when by their fruits every man shall be known, many a crown and many a purple robe would gladly be exchanged for the lowly brow and the white garment of the humble, unknown believer. What matters it when the shore is gained at last, how we have journeyed thither? The Angels know that the wilderness and desert, the humble cottage and the peaceful monastery, the still home and the patiently endured sick bed have been the scene of as many strifes and victories as the field of battle with all its turmoils and glories.

He of whom we now would speak was neither monarch nor martyr, neither Bishop nor Patriarch

—but simply a humble servant of God, who being endowed with high mental gifts returned them all, not without the usury of good works to their great Giver, and left to those who should come after him the precious legacy of an example striking for its humility, charity and devotion.

Ephrem the Syrian, (as he is usually called) was born at Nisibis,¹ a city in Mesopotamia, situate on the river Tigris. His parents were Christians, in a humble rank of life, and gave him the benefit of a pious education, consecrating him from the cradle to God's Service. His childish imagination was early impressed with the accounts given by his parents and by others who had suffered persecution for CHRIST'S Sake; and his first lessons of holiness and wisdom were drawn from the Scriptures. He took little delight in the pursuits or companions natural to his age, finding his chief and absorbing interest in study. How engrossed he was with this pursuit may be judged from a dream or vision of his early youth, in which he imagined that a very fruitful vine grew from his tongue, which ever continued spreading its branches further and further over the earth, and all the birds of heaven came to eat thereof, while the more its fruits were gathered, so much the more abundant did they become.

¹ Sozomen, iii. 16.

If, as Shakspeare says, some "achieve greatness," it would seem that some achieve knowledge without having it "thrust upon them," for S. Ephrem, without any instruction, became as we are told by Sozomen, "so proficient in the learning and language of the Syrians, that he comprehended with ease the most abstruse theories of philosophy."¹ His style of writing, says the same historian, was so replete with splendid oratory and sublimity of thought that he surpassed all the writers of Greece. "If the works of these writers were to be translated into Syriac, or any other language, and be divested, as it were, of the beauties of the Greek language, they would retain little of their original elegance and value. The productions of Ephrem have not this disadvantage; they were translated into Greek during his life, and yet they preserve much of their original force and power, so that his works are not less admired when read in Greek than when read in Syriac."²

S. Basil was a profound admirer of Ephrem's writings,³ and in his Hexameron alludes to him as one who was so far removed from all worldly science, that he approached the true and divine science. "The admirable Ephrem," says Theodoret, "used the Syriac language as a medium for reflecting the rays of divine grace; and although unacquainted

¹ Soz. iii. 16.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

with the language of the Greeks, he most ably refuted all their errors, and exposed all the evil machinations of the heretics."¹ S. Jerome says, that in the year 392, Ephrem's works were so celebrated and so highly esteemed that they were often read in the church after the Holy Scriptures; retaining when translated, he adds, all the energy and fire which the sublime mind of their author had infused into them.²

He was a poet too, and it is said that he wrote no less than three hundred thousand verses.³ The origin of his poetical compositions seems to have been connected with the heresy of Bardesanes. The son of this man, Harmonius by name, and one well versed in the refinements of Grecian lore, composed many poems in the Syriac language, the elegant diction and melodious versification of which formed a treacherous channel whereby to infuse his dangerous doctrine into the people's minds. Ephrem set to work to counteract this evil by composing similar songs and poems, in which harmony and melody were combined with poetry, and which accordingly attained the desired end, for the people readily adopted them.⁴

¹ Theod. iv. 29.

² Hier. v. ill. c. 115, quoted by Tillemont, Hist. Eccles. t. viii. p. 260.

³ Sozom. iii. 16.

⁴ Sozom. iii. 16. Theod. iv. 29.

"He was possessed," says a modern writer,¹ "of an extraordinary faculty of natural eloquence. Words flowed from him like a torrent, which yet were too slow for the impetuosity and multitude of thoughts with which he was overwhelmed in speaking on spiritual subjects. His conceptions were always clear, his diction pure and agreeable. He spoke with admirable perspicuity, copiousness, and sententiousness, in an easy unaffected style; and with so much sweetness, so pathetic a vehemence, so natural an accent, and so strong emotions of his own heart, that his words seemed to carry with them an irresistible power. His writings derive great strength from the genius and natural bold tropes of the Oriental languages applied by so great a master, and have a graceful beauty and force which no translation can attain; though his works are only impetuous effusions of an overflowing heart, not studied compositions. What recommends them beyond all other advantages of eloquence, is, they are all the language of the heart, and a heart penetrated with the most perfect sentiments of Divine love, confidence, compunction, humility, and all other virtues. They present his ardent, humble, and meek soul such as it was, and show how ardently he was occupied only on the great truths of salvation; how much he humbled

¹ Butler.

himself without intermission, under the Almighty Hand of God, Infinite in sanctity, and ‘terrible in His Justice;’ with what profound awe he trembled in the constant attention to His adorable Presence, and at the remembrance of His dreadful Judgment, and with what fervour he both preached and practised the most austere penance, labouring continually with all his strength, ‘to prepare himself a treasure for the last hour,’ as he expresses himself. His words strongly impress on the souls of others those sentiments with which he was penetrated: they carry light and conviction; they never fail to strike, and pierce to the very bottom of the soul. ‘Who that is proud,’ says S. Gregory Nyssen, ‘would not become the humblest of men by reading his discourse on humility? Who would not be inflamed with a divine fire by reading his treatise on charity? Who would not wish to be chaste in heart and spirit by reading the praises he has given to virginity?’ ”

That S. Ephrem did not regard the gift of words as one of little import, or that might lightly be abused, we find abundantly proved throughout his writings.

“Speak on, harp!” he exclaims, in one of his eloquent outpourings—“speak on, for silence is thine enemy; speak then whatsoever is to be spoken, for whatsoever we have no right to speak,

if it be spoken, to the righteous it will be blasphemy. Unto the unbelievers is he nigh akin that dares to pry ; on the very edge of death the rash standeth, in that he hath left the faith in his disputations to go down and search into the ocean of hidden things.

“ Marvel not, my child, at what I tell thee. . . . Who is there whose knowledge is great enough to feel after and mete out the sea of all wisdom ?

“ Cleanse the harp of thy soul from strife ! Let it not sing in thyself from thine own, for self-will is death. Let not proud boasting speak in thee strains of mockery, for it is wholly mischief to thee. Tune then such strings as have become discordant by disputation : draw in the strains which go astray in vain searchings.

“ Be first, my son, in the Presence of the Divinity, and then thou shalt sing the praise of God, for then art thou a living harp, and a reasonable. Liberty indeed thou hast in thy strings, and in thy words also thou harpest that from thy soul, and from thy will singest unto thy God. Set thy soul then in tune, and sing without discord. Purify thy strains and sing unto us, but not of hidden things. Be a disciple to all the things revealed, speak fair things which are free of danger ; weigh out then thy words, sounds which may not be blamed ; weigh also and sing strains that

cannot be reproved, and let thy song be, my son, 'Comfort to the servants of thy LORD, and then shall thy LORD reward thee.'

"Do not therefore sing things hurtful to mankind, neither divide, by thy disputation, brethren at unity together: put not a sword, which this questioning is, among the simple that believe in sincerity. Sing not then unto God perversely in the stead of praise, lest thou forget and sing iniquity. Sing like David to David's Son, and call Him LORD and SON as David did. . . . Let not thy tongue be a bridge for sounds, which letteth all words pass across it. Praise do thou send up to Him, as the tithing of thy strains! A waivesheaf of words offer unto Him from thine imagination, hymns also as first-fruits, and send up clustered hymns thy tongue hath culled."¹

So again, "The Mighty Nature that never was not, is spoken of by all mouths. The mouth that willeth to speak of That which is Unspeakable, bringeth Him to littleness, in that it sufficeth not for His Greatness. Every one then that wisheth to magnify God exceedingly, as He is Great in His own Nature, himself in magnifying Him is magnified in Him. Restrain searching which sufficeth not to reach Him, and gain silence, which is becoming, of Him. Give me, LORD, to use them

¹ Rhythms upon the Faith, xxiii., Oxf. Trans.

both discerningly, that I may neither search rashly, nor be silent carelessly. Teach me words of edification, and make me gain the silence of discernment."¹

In another place, "He that seeketh after the Truth in a grudging spirit, not even if he meeteth it will he be able to know it."²

To S. Ephrem, the Truth was life indeed ; as he says : "The truth above is able to increase to the east, and to spread to the west, and to lay hold on the north, and to clasp the south. Into the depth it went down and conquered ! into the height it went up and abode, and ruled in all places over all."³

The following may be taken as a specimen of his fervent, glowing poetry :

"Blessed be he, LORD, who in great love hath been worthy to call Thee Beloved SON, which Name GOD Thy FATHER Himself called Thee ! Blessed he, LORD, that hath weaned his mouth from all questionings, and hath called Thee the SON of GOD, which Name the HOLY GHOST called Thee ! Blessed he, LORD, who hath been worthy to believe in simplicity and to call Thee SON, as all the Prophets and Apostles called Thee ! Blessed he that knoweth, LORD, that Thy Majesty is unsearchable, and hath rebuked his tongue speedily,

¹ Rhythm i.

² Rhythm xvii.

³ Rhythm lxi.

that by silence he might honour Thy generation ! Blessed he, LORD, that hath obtained a hidden eye, wherewith to see how the Angels turn abashed from Thee, and how that creatures cannot attain to Thee, and hath given Thee thanks, because he hath been worthy of having Thee to dwell in him ! Blessed be he that knoweth, LORD, that Thou art GOD, the SON of GOD, and knoweth himself whose son he is—a mortal, the son of a mortal ! Blessed he that hath reflected that Adonai is Thy FATHER, and hath also remembered his own generation, that he is a son of Adam, of the dust ! Blessed he that hath reflected, that the Angels by silence confess Thee, and hath speedily chidden with himself because his tongue hath been so daring ! Blessed he that hath understood that the heavens above were still, and the earth below was moved, and hath quieted his soul whilst among the waves thereof ! Blessed he, LORD, that hath learnt that the Seraph crieth, ‘Holy,’ and is still ; that the Seraphim search not at all, and that hath left alone what the Seraphim leave, and hath chosen what the Seraphim chose !

“ Who then is not astonished that Thou art sitting at the Right Hand, and that dust which sitteth upon dust upon its dunghill searcheth into Thee ! Blessed, LORD, be he that knoweth that Thou art in the Bosom of the Divine Essence, and hath

remembered that himself is fast falling into the bosom of the earth, his mother ! Who, LORD, is not astonished that Thou art the Creator of all creatures, that man assayeth to search into Thee, and yet knoweth not what his own soul is ! This is a wonder that it is Thou, LORD, Alone that knowest Thy FATHER, and yet vile dust lifteth itself up even to search into Thy FATHER in Thee, O LORD. Blessed he, LORD, that by his conversation hath become godlike, who, as having sanctified himself, calleth Thee GOD, the SON of GOD !”¹

The following Rhythm is also given entire ; its rolling measure and oriental richness giving so good an idea of S. Ephrem’s peculiar and expressive eloquence, so fraught with hidden meanings, and deep, almost unearthly devotion. He is speaking of that keystone of Christianity, the Incarnation.

“ A thousand thousands stand, ten thousand ten thousands run ; thousands and ten thousands are not able to search into One ; for all of them in silence stand to minister. He hath no assessor save the SON, Who is from Him : within the Silence alone is there investigation into Him. If the Angels had come to search, they had met the Silence, and been restrained. The First Born entered the womb, and the pure Virgin suffered not. He went in, and came forth in pangs, and the

¹ Rhythms on the Faith, iii.

Fair One perceived Him. Glorious and hidden was His entering in; vile and visible His coming forth; for He was God in His going in, and Man in His coming forth. A wonder and an astonishment to liars! Fire went into the womb, and clothed itself with a Body and came forth! Gabriel gave the Name of 'LORD,' to Him, Who is the LORD of Angels. He called Him 'LORD,' that he might teach that He was his LORD, and not his fellow servant. Michael was Gabriel's fellow servant. The SON is the LORD of servants; high is His Nature, as is His Name. The servant cannot search Him out, because how great soever the work is, greater than it is the Workman!

"Wondrous is it that the mind should gather all its forces to break through and gaze upon Thy light. Thy Brightness came forth but a little; It scattereth it, and throws it back altogether. Who shall look upon the SON, Whose rays are fearful? The whole of them, with His whole Nature, are closely blended. He is the Sun Whom the Prophets proclaimed, with healing in His wings, and trouble among His examiners. Shall one feel Thee with his hands, when there is not even a mind keen enough to feel after Thee and search Thee out, seeing Thou art a great mountain? Shall one listen to Thee with the ears, seeing Thou art more fearful than thunder? A stillness

art Thou that cannot be heard, yea, a silence that cannot be listened unto. Shall a man see Thee with his eyes, when Thou art the bright morning Light? From all is the sight of Thee concealed!

“It is not for weak beings alone that the sight of Thee is too great, or the searching out of Thee is concealed; for the senses of the body, since they much need other senses, which are in the inmost imagination, do not grasp even the smallest things within their search. Let us then ask the Angels that are near Thy gate. Though the Angels stand before Thee with praises, yet know they not upon what side to see Thee. They sought Thee above in the height, they saw thee in the depth; they searched for Thee in the heaven, they saw Thee in the deep; they looked for Thee with the Adorable One, they found Thee amid the creatures; they came down to Thee and gave praise. When they had begun to inquire into Thy Appearance among things created, they comprehended not how, by running up and down, to come to a stand in their search into Thee. For they saw Thee in the depth, they saw Thee above on high, they saw Thee in the sepulchre, they saw Thee in the chamber, they saw Thee dead, they found Thee a raiser of the dead; they were amazed, they were astonished, and had no strength left.

“In every place is Thy mysterious Presence, LORD,

and from every place Thou art withdrawn. Though Thy mysterious Presence be in the height, yet it feeleth not that Thou art what Thou art. Though Thy mysterious Presence be in the depth, is it not comprehended what it is. Though Thy mysterious Presence be in the sea, from the sea Thou art concealed: though Thy mysterious Presence be in the dry land, it knoweth not that Thou art He. Blessed be the glorious hidden One, since even Thy little mystery is a fountain of mysteries! who is able to clear up mysteries that fail not? If a man were to take a likeness of Thee, it would be a fountain whence all likenesses would flow, and to what should we be able to look and shadow out Thy Image upon our heart? In Thy one adorable Image ten thousand beauteous things are crowded together.

“Wondrous art Thou altogether on all sides that we seek Thee! Thou art near and far off, who shall approach to Thee? No searching is able to extend and reach unto Thee. When it had reached itself forth to approach, it was intercepted and stopped short. It is too short to reach Thy mountain; faith doth find it, and love with prayer. Imagining is easier for us than speaking in words; the mind is able to extend itself to every place; when it cometh to walk in Thy way to seek after Thee, it loseth its path before itself;

it is perplexed and halteth. And if the mind be overcome, how much more the language, whose path is amongst perplexities.

“This becometh the mouth, that it should praise and keep silence, and if it is asked to be hasty, let it betake its whole self to silence as its stronghold. Thus only can it comprehend, if it be not hasty to comprehend; the quiet is more able to comprehend than the rash that is hasty. The weak that searcheth is as a feeble one, that laboureth to measure the fearful sea.

“Lo, if the mouth refrain, LORD, from searching into Thee, no gracious act would it have done, if able to search into Thee, it yet refused to search! Its weakness hindered it from that to which its audacity led it away. It had been a gracious act in it, had it decided to be still; for silence would have been a port to it, that it should not perish, in perplexity in Thy sea and Thy billows.

“And if there be a mode of seeking Him out, come let us seek out the Hidden One; come let us in astonishment feel after Him if He can be comprehended. Thou art revealed, LORD, to babes and hidden from the cunning; to him that believeth Thou art found, to him that searcheth Thou art hidden. Blessed be he that is simple in searching out Thee and vigorous at Thy promise. Searching, LORD, is too little to glorify Thee within itself.

The power that extendeth unto every place is able to search for Thee, in the height to shadow Thee forth, and in the depth to feel after Thee, but though reaching to every place is not able to find out Thee. Blessed be he that hath felt that only in the Bosom of Thy FATHER is the inquiry into Thee fully set at rest.

“The Seraph that is winged and flieth is too weak to search Thee out; his wing is weak in comparison of Thee, so as not to measure out Thy Majesty. In Thy Bosom are the worlds laid; how much soever one would wander into it, one is hindered. The Seraph whose voice proclaims Thee Holy, in reverential silence keeps from search into Thee. Woe unto him that is bold, when the Seraph before Thee with his wings covereth his face! The Cherubs bear that Mighty One Who beareth all. Bowing downwards do the hosts of the Cherubim in fear beneath Thy chariot veil themselves and fear to gaze therein, carrying yet not able to find Him, trembling when approaching. Blessed he that hath learnt the honor due to Thee from them, and hath praised and been silent in fear.”¹

It is needful to take the humility before alluded to into account, when Ephrem speaks of the sins of his childhood. The clearest mirror soonest shows the least stain or sully, and thus he speaks with horror

¹ Rhythm iv.

of his bursts of childish vehemence ; of the passing doubt, (with which, alas, Satan too often tempts keenly intellectual minds) as to whether the world was indeed governed by Providence or by chance ; and of the mischievous and boyish freak which led him one day when wandering in a forest of his native Mesopotamia, to hunt a neighbour's cow, until being lost in the mountains, the poor animal was devoured by wild beasts.

A short time after this misdemeanour, Ephrem was travelling, and night coming on he took shelter in a shepherd's cot. During the night, the flock was either stolen or devoured by wolves, and the owner imprisoned the shepherd together with Ephrem, whom he accused as an accomplice in the fraud. They were confined together with several other prisoners, who freely discussing their crimes, appeared all to be innocent of those actually imputed to them, but guilty of others not less reprehensible in the sight of God and man. These acknowledgments aroused in Ephrem's mind a strong conviction of the watchfulness of Providence, and how true those inspired words are, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Thus impressed, one night he dreamed that an angel stood beside him, and asked why he was in prison ? Ephrem replied with tears that he was accused of stealing sheep, though he was innocent. Then he dreamed

that the angel replied, with a benignant smile, "I know you are not guilty of that crime, but I know of what you were guilty just before. Bethink you of it and own that you suffer justly. See that God is Just and His Judgments true. Be holy and you will perceive His Divine Providence."

After great terror and alarm Ephrem was delivered, and on the night of his deliverance, he again dreamed that he saw the same angel, who said, "Return home, repent of your fault, and doubt no more that the Eye of God watches over all things."

Accordingly Ephrem returned home, and having been washed in the laver of Holy Baptism, he conceived an earnest desire to fly from the distractions of society ; so seeking out a venerable man, (probably S. James, afterwards Bishop of Nisibis,¹) who followed the ascetic life, he joined his little brotherhood, and remained there some time. He was only eighteen at this time, but already a great lover of solitude and remarkably serious in demeanour.² His whole mind was now given up to his monastic duties. It was a rule in the Mesopotamian brotherhoods that every member should follow some manual labour, and Ephrem worked at sail-making, while his heart soared in deep and exalted devotion towards the God he so devoutly loved.

¹ Theod. ii. 30.

² Sozom. iii. 16.

Asceticism was at its zenith at this time, and we find Ephrem practising what would now be counted great excesses therein—passing several days together without tasting food; sleeping barely as much as was actually necessary for the preservation of life, and similar mortifications. Yet he was moderate compared to some of the ascetics of his day. Macarius, one of the most eminent of these, spent sixty years of his life in the desert; and another of the same name is described as dried up with abstinence.¹ Anuphus inhabited a cell in which he could neither stand erect nor lie at full length. Yet these men were not useless in their generation, let alone those “Saints’ prevailing prayers,” which are said to win such grace for the heedless world without. Wherever their services could promote the glory of God or the good of their fellow men, the solitary ascetics hastened to the task, to say the least as readily as those who were cumbered with earthly ties and cares, and with much serving. An interesting tale illustrating this assertion is told of one Aphraates, a Syrian, known by reason of his great sanctity as the “holy monk.” This venerable man seeing the danger which threatened the faith by reason of the Arian heresy, counted it his duty to leave the monastic life he loved, and work for the Church amid the strife of

¹ Sozom. iii. 14.

the world. One day as he was passing the royal palace in the city of Antioch, he attracted the Emperor's attention, who inquired the name of that venerable old man, clad in a rough goat-skin garb? He was told it was Aphraates, whose influence over the inhabitants of the city was marvellous. The Emperor addressed him. "Where are you going?" he asked. "I am going to pray for the preservation of your empire," was the reply.

"But you ought to stay at home, and pray according to your monastic rules," the Emperor sneeringly rejoined.

"True, O Emperor," answered Aphraates, "and so long as the flocks of CHRIST remained at peace, I did so. But now that the flock is beset with so many dangers, and exposed to the onslaught of so many foes, I am constrained to do all in my power to save the sheep. Tell me," he continued, "how a damsel should act, who being left in charge of her father's house, sees it on fire? Ought she to remain within her chamber, and allow the flames to spread until they reach and consume her, or ought she not rather to hasten hither and thither to fetch water that they may be extinguished? You will surely tell me the latter is the course she should adopt, in all prudence. Even so am I doing, O Emperor. I am hastening to extinguish the flames which you have kindled in my FATHER'S

House." The Emperor remained silent and conscience-stricken.¹

With a similar spirit S. James of Nisibis, already mentioned in connexion with S. Ephrem, being raised to the episcopal throne, took an active part in the defence of his city when it was besieged by the Persian King Sapor, not fearing to mount the walls, and expose himself to any danger.²

It appears that during the siege Ephrem was also within the city, and uniting with the Bishop in his efforts. In the monastery Ephrem was noted for his singular gentleness and meekness, so that "the peaceable man of God" became his title. A well known anecdote is told of him at this time, when after an unusually long fast, the brother who was bringing him a mess of pottage let the vessel fall, and spilt all its contents. He was in great consternation at his mishap, but Ephrem smiling said, "My brother, as the supper will not come to us, let us go to it!" and sitting down on the ground, endeavoured to gather up such remains as he could. After a time Julian, a simple-hearted and pious

¹ Theod. iv. 25, 26.

² Theod. ii. 30. It was on this occasion that Sapor terrified and discomfited exclaimed, "God is fighting for the Romans!" and in his ineffectual wrath, shot up an arrow towards heaven, to take vengeance on the Deity Who suffered him to be vanquished.

brother to whom Ephrem was warmly attached, died; and believing that he should in so doing serve God, the latter determined to go to Edessa.

The Syriac traditions concerning this city are so curious, and beautiful in their simplicity, that they may well be mentioned here, since doubtless much of the attraction possessed by the place arose from them. Eusebius quotes the story, as literally translated by himself from the Syrian archives.¹

Abgarus, "King of the nations beyond the Euphrates," had long been wasting away under a terrible and incurable disease, when hearing the fame of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, he conceived a hope that from this wonderful Physician Who healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and raised the dead, he too might receive health and life. Accordingly he wrote the following letter:—

"Abgarus to JESUS at Jerusalem by Ananias the courier.

"Abgarus, prince of Edessa, sends greeting to JESUS, the Excellent SAVIOUR, Who has appeared in the borders of Jerusalem.

"I have heard the reports respecting Thee and Thy cures, as performed by Thee without medicines and without the use of herbs. For as it is said, Thou causest the blind to see again, the lame to walk, and Thou cleanseest the lepers, and Thou castest

¹ Euseb. i. 13.

out impure spirits and demons, and Thou healest those that are tormented by long disease, and Thou raisest the dead. And hearing all these things of Thee, I concluded in my mind one of two things : either that Thou art God, and having descended from heaven, doest these things, or else doing them Thou art the SON of GOD. Therefore now I have written and besought Thee to visit me, and to heal the disease with which I am afflicted. I have also heard that the Jews murmur against Thee, and are plotting to injure Thee ; I have, however, a very small but noble state, which is sufficient for us both."

Inscribed in the same archives, was the answer of the SAVIOUR.

"Blessed art thou, O Abgarus, who without seeing, hast believed in Me. For it is written concerning Me, that they who have seen Me, will not believe, that they who have not seen, may believe and live. But in regard to what thou hast written, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that I should fulfil all things here, for which I have been sent. And after this fulfilment, thus to be received again by Him that sent Me. And after I have been received up, I will send to thee a certain one of My disciples, that he may heal thy affliction, and give life to thee and to those who are with thee."

“After the Ascension of JESUS,” (so proceeds the tradition,) “Thaddeus the Apostle was sent, who when he came, remained in the house of Tobias. . . . He in the power of GOD began to heal every kind of disease and infirmity; so that all were amazed. But when Abgarus heard the great deeds and miracles which he performed, and how he healed men in the Name and Power of JESUS CHRIST, he began to suspect that this was the very person concerning whom JESUS had written, saying, After I have been received up again, I will send to thee one of My disciples, who shall heal thy affliction. . . . Having therefore sent for Thaddeus, . . . on his entrance something extraordinary appeared on his countenance. . . . Abgarus asked whether he were truly a disciple of JESUS the SON of GOD? . . . And Thaddeus answered, ‘Since thou hast had great confidence in the LORD JESUS, Who hath sent me, therefore I am sent to thee. And moreover, if thou believest in Him with increasing faith, the petitions of thy heart shall be granted thee, as thou believest.’ And Abgarus answered, ‘So much did I believe in Him, that I had formed the resolution to take forces, in order to destroy those Jews who had crucified Him, had I not been deterred from my purpose by a regard for the Roman empire.’ Thaddeus replied, ‘Our LORD and GOD, JESUS the CHRIST, hath fulfilled

the Will of His FATHER, and having fulfilled it, was taken up again to His FATHER.' Then said Thaddeus, 'Therefore I place my hand upon thee in the Name of the same LORD JESUS.' And this being done, he was immediately healed of the sickness and sufferings with which he was afflicted. . . . Many of the same city were also healed by the same Apostle, who performed great and wonderful deeds, and proclaimed the Word of God. After this Abgarus said, 'Thaddeus, thou doest these things by the power of God, and we are filled with wonder. But beside these things, I request thee also to inform me respecting the Coming of JESUS, how He was born, and as to the power with which He performed these things which we have heard.' And Thaddeus answered, 'Now indeed, I will not tell thee, since I have been sent to proclaim the Word abroad ; but to-morrow assemble all thy citizens, and before them I will proclaim the Word of God, and will sow among them the Word of Life, both respecting the Coming of JESUS, as He was, and respecting His mission, and for what purpose He was sent by the FATHER ; also concerning the power of His works, and the mysteries which He declared in the world ; by what power also He did these things, concerning His new mode of preaching, His lowly and abject condition, His humiliation in His external appearance ; how He

humbled Himself, and died, and lowered His Divinity; what things also He suffered from the Jews, how He was crucified, and descended into Hades, and burst the bars which had never yet been broken, and rose again, and also raised with Himself the dead that had slept for ages. And how He descended alone, but ascended with a great multitude to His FATHER. And how He sitteth at the Right Hand of GOD and the FATHER, with glory in the heavens, and how He is about to come again with glory and power, to judge the living and the dead.' Abgarus therefore commanded his subjects to be called early in the morning, and to hear the annunciation of Thaddeus; and after this he commanded gold and silver to be given him; but he would not receive it, saying, 'If we have left our own, how shall we take what belongs to others?'¹

To Edessa therefore S. Ephrem came. On his way, he prayed to GOD that from the first person he encountered in the city, he might learn some sacred truth. Much to his disappointment, he was met at the gates by a common woman, who stared rudely at him. "Why dost thou thus gaze

¹ There have been many controversies concerning this tradition; the fact, however, of S. Thomas having sent Thaddeus, one of the seventy, to Edessa as a missionary, is probably correct.

upon me?" he inquired. "Well may I," the woman answered smartly, "since I do but look to the author of my being, as woman was formed from man ; but thou who wast taken from the dust, shouldest ever look towards the earth."

Ere long Ephrem was raised to the Diaconate, beyond which order his humility prevented him from rising, even to the extent of feigning insanity when messengers came from some see to appoint him Bishop. But although thus holding the lowest rank in the Church, he was looked upon with exceeding reverence by all, and numbered amongst the greatest doctors and authorities of his day. He had many disciples, some of whom attained themselves to no mean reputation ;¹ and the influence he exercised among them was considerable. In one of his own works Ephrem relates, how early one morning, as he went out of Edessa with two of his disciples, and beholding the clear glorious heavens all spangled with bright and beautiful stars, he said within himself, "If the lustre of these luminaries be so dazzling, how will the saints shine when CHRIST shall come in glory?" "But suddenly," he continues, "the thought of that terrible day struck my mind, and I trembled in all my joints, and was seized with convulsions, and in an agony of fear sighing and overwhelmed

¹ Soz. iii. 16.

with a flood of tears, I cried out in bitter anguish of mind : How shall I then be found ? How shall I stand before that tribunal ! A monster infested with pride among the humble and perfect ; a goat among the sheep ; a barren tree without fruit. The martyrs will show their torments, and the monks their virtues, but thou, alas ! O sinful, vain, and arrogant soul, wilt only bear thy sloth and negligence.”¹

How deeply this solemn subject affected him may be further seen from a sermon on the Coming of CHRIST, preached in Edessa. “Beloved of CHRIST,” he says, “lend a favorable attention to what I am going to say on the dreadful Coming of our LORD. Remembering that hour, I tremble with an excess of fear. For who can relate those horrible things ? what tongue can express them ? when the King of kings, arising from His Throne of glory, shall descend, and sit a Just Judge, calling to account all the inhabitants of the earth. At this thought I am ready to faint and fail, my limbs quake for fear, my eyes swim in tears, my voice fails, my lips quiver, my tongue falters, and my thoughts are wrapt up in silence. I am obliged to teach you concerning these things, yet fear hardly suffers me to speak. A loud thunder now

¹ S. Ephr. de Compunct. ; quoted by Butler on the writings of S. Ephrem.

affrights us ; how then shall we stand at the sound of the last trumpet, louder than any thunder, summoning the dead to rise ! Then the bones of all men in the bowels of the earth, hearing this voice, shall suddenly run and seek out their joints ; and in the twinkling of an eye, we shall see all men risen and assembled to judgment. The great King shall command, and instantly the earth shall quake, and the troubled seas shall give up the dead which they possess, whether devoured by fish, beasts, or fowl. All in a moment shall appear present, and not a hair be wanting."

He goes on describing the frightful fire consuming all things on the earth ; the angels separating the sheep and the goats, the standard of the great King, that Cross on which He was nailed, shining bright, and borne before Him ; men standing to meet this tremendous Majesty, revolving their own deeds, the just with joy, the wicked worse than dead with fear ; the angels and cherubim appearing, singing, Holy, Holy, Holy : the heavens opened, and the King of kings revealed in such incomparable glory, that the heavens and the earth will fly from before His Face. "Who then," he asks, "can stand, when the books are opened, and all our actions, thoughts, and words called to an account ?"

Here sighs and tears broke their way, and the

preacher was forced to remain silent. His congregation cried aloud that he should proceed. "Then all mankind will stand with eyes cast down, between life and death, between heaven and hell, before the tribunal, and all degrees of men shall be called to a vigorous examination. Woe is me! I would fain tell you the rest, but I am lost in fear, in confusion, and in anxiety."

Once more the people cried out, "Tell us the rest for the sake of our salvation, in God's Name."

"Then, beloved in CHRIST," he continued, "shall be required in all Christians the seal of baptism, entire faith, and that solemn renunciation which they once made, saying, 'I renounce Satan, and all his works; not one, or two, or five, but *all* the works of the devil.' In that hour this renunciation will be demanded of us, and happy is he who shall have kept it faithfully as he promised."

Here S. Ephrem again paused in tears, and the people cried, "Tell us also what follows." "I will tell you in my grief," he answered, "I will speak through my sighs and tears; these things cannot be related without tears, for they are very dreadful." "O, servant of God," the people exclaimed, "we beseech thee, instruct us fully!" Striking his breast and weeping, the venerable preacher continued, "O, my brethren, beloved of CHRIST, how sorrowful, how terrible are the things you

desire to hear! O terrible hour! Woe is me! Who shall dare to relate, who can bear to hear this last and terrible word! All ye who have tears, weep with me, and ye who have none, hearken to your doom, and let us beware that we neglect not our salvation. Then shall they be separated, without hopes of ever seeing each other again, bishops from fellow-bishops, priests from fellow-priests, deacons from fellow-deacons; those who were kings as the basest slaves; children from parents, friends from kindred and intimates. Then princes, philosophers, wise men of the world, seeing themselves thus parted, shall cry out to the saints with bitter tears, 'Farewell eternally, saints and servants of God; farewell parents, children, relations, and friends; farewell prophets, apostles, and martyrs; farewell holy mother of God, you would all have had us saved, but we would not. Farewell, life-giving cross; farewell, Paradise of delights, Kingdom without end, the heavenly Jerusalem. Farewell to you all, we shall never more behold one of you.'¹

The effect of this fervent eloquence was such as

¹ Quoted by Butler.—No doubt some would call this sermon very "histrionic." Our Blessed LORD, His Apostles, and Saints were not afraid of such accusations, but rather believed as Scripture says, that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," and even so with gestures likewise.

might have been anticipated, and S. Gregory Nyssen says that it reached the hardest hearts, and penetrated the most obdurate spirits. Nor was his eloquence only exercised on these subjects of fear and terror—repentance, faith, and humility, were favorite topics—nor were the exceeding Love and Goodness of God forgotten. Often when he lay down at night, reflecting on the great and boundless Love of God, he rose again to offer his fervent tribute of thanks. “But being deterred,” he says, “by the remembrance of my sins, I melted into tears, and should have been altogether overwhelmed, had not the thief, the publican, the Magdalene, the Canaanitish and Samaritan women, and other examples of mercy, given me courage and comfort.”¹

His natural love of tranquillity and obscurity made him shrink from teaching others, and in so doing, perhaps condemning himself; “But,” he says, “shall I keep silence lest I condemn myself? What other means have I, O my God, whereby to prove my zeal and love for Thee? Truly I will speak, and cease not to preach; for better were I condemned indeed, than fail in the ministry Thou hast intrusted to me. Gladly will I die, so long as Thou art glorified. . . . Let the heathen learn therein how great is the strength and power of

¹ Paræneses. Quoted by Butler.

love. Let the Jews behold how great is the ardour of my love for Thee, and that without sword or fire, or rack, I can die for Thee.”¹

He was continually consulted for spiritual direction, and combated the prevalent heresies of his day, especially those of Arius and Sabellius, with such successful vigour, that he seemed, says S. Gregory Nyssen, like an experienced and triumphant athlete, opposed to weak children.

The reign of Julian the Apostate, and his persecutions, filled the Church with terror, and Ephrem prepared with his brethren to suffer. “I would strip,” he says, “and prepare to enter the lists with the ministers and satellites of idols; for already we hear the Gentile trumpet sounding the onslaught, and constraining Thy servants to make ready to receive the attack. I hear menaces from the west, and the torments with which they seek to terrify us. I tremble, O my God, because Thou hatest sinners, yet I am filled with gladness, because Thou didst die for sinners. . . . For this Faith I would fain die. Gather together, Jews and heretics, join with pagans and barbarians, let me suffer death for JESUS CHRIST. I shall grieve for your crime, but I shall rejoice to die. Of a truth, when I think upon myself, I fear death, but JESUS CHRIST is my hope and my confidence.

¹ Op. 123. Quoted by Tillemont, t. viii. p. 289.

I fear myself, but I hope in Him. My weakness flies—my strength abides. I blush and tremble when I look upon myself. I grow strong and courageous when I turn my eyes on Him.”¹

S. Ephrem’s visit to Cæsarea has already been mentioned.² He had heard in a dream a voice from Heaven which indicated that there he should find costly and precious spiritual food, and accordingly, going direct to the Church, he beheld S. Basil praying for the people, and preaching to them the words of divine wisdom, and hovering over him Ephrem seemed to see a dove whiter than snow. Filled with veneration and love, the Syrian poet burst out into fervid expressions of admiration of the saintly Bishop, and still more of the wonderful goodness of that God from Whom proceed all good gifts, and through Whom Alone the ministry either of men or of angels can reach the hearts of sinners.

When the service was ended, S. Basil sent for Ephrem, and receiving him with great warmth and friendship, applied to him the words of the Psalmist, “Ephraim also is the strength of my head.”³ Some time they spent together, mutually profiting by the deep well of heavenly wisdom and love which each possessed; each imagining himself

¹ Ephrem. Op. 123 and 113. Quoted by Tillemont, t. viii. p. 304.

² Life of S. Basil. Vol. i. p. 106.

³ Ps. lx. 7.

to be the disciple, each revering the other as his master and superior in all spiritual things. Then rising up once more, and taking leave of S. Basil, in the firm hope and faith of a joyful, never-ending re-union hereafter, Ephrem returned to Edessa.

The term of his earthly pilgrimage was nearly ended, when a very grievous famine afflicted the city of Edessa and its vicinity. On this occasion Ephrem quitted his retirement, in order to minister to those on whom the scourge fell most severely—the poor. His voice was raised in witness against the rich, who secure themselves in the abundance of their wealth neglected to provide for the cruel and pressing wants of their poorer brethren. Earnestly reminding them that whereas all these temporal treasures would pass away, leaving their possessors not only no better, but rather the worse, unless they had been wisely and well used; so if offered to CHRIST in His poor they would indeed be a treasure laid up where rust and moth do not corrupt, or thieves break through and steal. The “King’s Messengers,”—even in the fourth century wise and godly men warned their listeners to intrust their riches to those sure and safe envoys.

And so he prevailed; and the rich who forgot their Master’s injunctions to give freely in order that they might receive freely, quailed beneath his

searching eye, and seeking some excuse declared that they knew not to whom they could trust so important a matter, every man being greedy of his own gain. Then the holy man offered himself to be their almoner, and to undertake the care of the poor if the rich would supply the means.¹

They willingly agreed, and straightway behold the solitary, the monk, he who had spent his life in seclusion and stillness, now plunged into the active and harassing occupation of receiving and employing large sums of money for the poor, distributing food, tending the sick and burying the dead; himself ministering at once to both soul and body. Taking possession of the public porticos, he placed three hundred beds there, and received all those whether from town or country who had no other home. "Thus," (quaintly observes an old historian) "even as Joshua opened the waters of the Jordan that the children of Israel might pass to the promised land, so did S. Ephrem open the hitherto closed hands of the rich, whence flowed alms deeds and good works, admitting them to the promised land, (not earthly, but heavenly) which God has held forth to the merciful."²

This was S. Ephrem's last act. So soon as the time of trouble was ended, he returned to his solitude, and, exhausted probably with his past exer-

¹ Sozom. iii. 16.

² Tillemont, t. viii. p. 311.

tions, sickened of a fever. He prepared at once to die. "Entering" (so he wrote) "upon so long and dangerous a journey, I have my viaticum, even Thee, O SON of GOD. In my extreme spiritual hunger, I will feed on Thee, the Repairer of mankind. So it shall be that no fire will dare to approach me, for it will not be able to bear the sweet saving odour of Thy Body and Blood."¹

He wrote his last will and testament—not to leave earthly possessions, since he had none; "Ephrem," he said of himself, "has never had purse or scrip, or staff, gold or silver, or any earthly possession whatsoever: that he learnt from his King"—but to leave many precious words of counsel and benediction to his disciples. He also made special request that he might not have a pompous funeral, or any eulogistic oration be pronounced over him. "Sing no funeral hymns, at Ephrem's burial, make no flattering speeches. Wrap not my carcass in a costly shroud, erect no monument to my memory. Allow me only the place and portion of a pilgrim; for I am a pilgrim and stranger on earth as all my fathers were."²

Many of his disciples, some wealthy persons, were gathered round his bed, and heard his exhortations that all the honors they would have paid him should rather go in alms to the poor; one fell down on his

¹ Necrosima, can. 81.

² S. Eph. in Testam.

knees and confessed that he had just resolved not thus to employ a costly shroud which he had prepared for S. Ephrem, but now found he would reject. A young and noble lady, named Lamprotata, one of Ephrem's spiritual daughters, besought that she might provide his coffin, and to this the dying man consented, provided it was quite plain and unostentatious. Having given her his last benediction he turned away and never spoke again, remaining in silent prayer until the moment when God hearkening to his longing intreaty, "When shall I come to appear before Thy Presence?" set his spirit free, and only the withered mute body was left amid his faithful loving children in CHRIST.

He is commemorated by the Greek Church on January 28th, in the western branch first on February 1st, and later July 9th. His works are most voluminous, and in so great esteem that even during his lifetime many were translated from their original Syriac into Greek.¹

Photius asserts that S. Ephrem wrote more than a thousand works, an enumeration in which single sermons and treatises must probably be comprehended. There is scarcely any subject of piety and religion of which he has not treated. Among these are treatises on the Passions, on Repentance, on Compunction, on Virtue, on the Beatitudes,

¹ Sozom. iii. 16.

Counsels to Novices, Commentaries on the Books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Chronicles, Job, and the Prophets, and many sermons both polemical and practical. The greater part of his works have been translated into either Latin or Greek, and are very valuable in testimony of the true doctrine and faith of primitive Catholicity.

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